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# GAY \* LITERATURE

SPRING 1976 / NUMBER SIX



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# GAY LITERATURE

A LITERARY JOURNAL

SPRING 1976 / NUMBER SIX

**Editor : Daniel Curzon**

**Subscriptions : \$ 8.00 Four Issues**

**\$ 2.00 Single Issue**

**\$10.00 Library Rate**

**\$12.00 Foreign Rate**

Lavender Library, Archives  
and Cultural Exchange  
Sacramento, CA

**Published by : Daniel Curzon**

**English Department**

**State University of California**

**Fresno, California, 93740**

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# The Character of Aretino's Marescalco

by Jack Shreve

The critics all agree that Renaissance playwright Pietro Aretino (1492-1556) could have done a better job sketching the personality of the namesake character in his play, *Il Marescalco* ("The Farrier" or "The Horse-Doctor"). But we should realize that the character Aretino portrays is a homosexual and that homosexuality in Aretino's day was not something about which one could speak openly. Aretino's hands, in a manner of speaking, were tied. The love that dared not speak its name in Victorian England was, despite its incidence in both periods, probably no more acceptable as a way of life in Renaissance Italy. When Marescalco attempts to get from his nurse the specific quality about him that she finds so degrading, the nurse answers only with "You know quite well what I mean." The fault is too outrageous even to be named in plain language. Aretino endeavored not to offend his illustrious audience, and a more detailed analysis of his subject's homosexuality would have touched on themes offensive to many.

We have, therefore, a hero whose most intimate thoughts are denied to us primarily because of the priggishness of Aretino's stage audience. With the scant details that we are given, however, I propose to probe the psychology of this interesting Renaissance personage. I will begin by

sketching some of the traits that I consider basic to his personality:

- (1) Homosexuality
- (2) Misogyny
- (3) Paranoia
- (4) Pessimism

and then by examining the progression of his feelings as we see them presented in the play.

**Homosexuality.** The Italian Renaissance has often been claimed as one of the great homosexual ages of man. Gross appetites and savage passions "lurked" beneath brilliant social culture, as John Addington Symonds observed,<sup>1</sup> but that they only "lurked" is significant of the reactionary distaste such emotions inspired in the ordinary man of the times. The squeamishness toward the "vizio nefando" characteristic of the Middle Ages does not seem to have changed noticeably with the advent of the Renaissance; Brunetto Latini, for example, immortalized by Dante as a homosexual, in his own works condemned homosexuality as the basest of sins.<sup>2</sup>

It is true, however, that Italians confronted the subject more frankly than did other Europeans of the Renaissance; negative or casual references to homosexuality appear in Ariosto, Berni, Boccaccio, Bronzino, Dante, Poliziano and others.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the scholar in search of

any sexual theme within the pages of Don Quixote has to delve far below the level of the printed word and, barring Shakespeare's controversial sonnets, the subject is mentioned only once in the entire body of his plays (*Troilus and Cressida*, V, i, 15-17).

Further, it could be argued that Aretino's treatment of Marescalco's homosexuality is one of the least negative in all of Renaissance literature. Courtly life is the primary target of Aretino's satire, not the sexual persuasion of his protagonist. Marescalco's terrible phobia of marriage is a constant source of hilarity for the audience, but the pomposity, materialism and shallow psychology of the courtly characters put the humor of the farrier's plight into a relatively sympathetic perspective. Marescalco is not treated as anti-hero in the style of Boccaccio's *Ser Ciapellotto* and *Pietro di Vinciolo*; his death is not called for at the end of the play, as happens to the sexually offending protagonist in Poliziano's *Orfeo*; and we are not given anything to dissuade us from believing, if we choose, that the "married" couple may find happiness together.

Misogyny. During the Middle Ages, misogyny figured prominently within the Christian vision. Its case was based on the Biblical story of the fall of Eve, and on pronouncements against women made by St. Paul and St. Jerome. Even in our own times, Norman O. Brown in *Love's Body*,<sup>4</sup> has recognized the "unconscious hostility between the sexes," and the "taboos which prescribe sexual separation, mutual avoidance." In Marescalco's case, the misogyny he experiences is closely linked to his homosexuality, but some of his comments emanate from depths not necessarily affected by homosexual emotion, as for example, his judgment:

"Quanti mariti conosco io, che, so non  
fussero le mogli, andrebbono trionfando."  
(Act V, sc. ii)

"As for the married men I know, if it  
were not for their wives, they would  
be successful."

When he inveighs against the perversity of the great lords, in another example, the worst he can say of them is that they are "like women" (Act II, sc. iii).

Paranoia. Paranoia is a form of mental disorder characterized by delusions of persecution. While it is true that the farrier suffers at the hands of the court, he imagines that his problem is more important to the world than in fact it is. To his nurse, he complains that the world "enjoys" his problems; to Ambrogio, he claims that even the "demented" of the earth take pleasure in his pain; and to the Jewish vendor, he says that now even the synagogues are laughing at him. Aretino handles the vision of a synagogue filled with Jews laughing at Marescalco masterfully, and it is indeed an image worthy of Luis Bunuel.

Pessimism. As a homosexual, Marescalco is fully aware of his limitations in Renaissance society, and consequently does not expect happiness from a life ruled entirely by heterosexual norms. His most pessimistic speech is given in Act V, sc. iii, in which he prefigures Schopenhauer and Leopardi:

"Brigata, al pedagogo non s'ha da rispondere  
altro, se non che questi figli, che vuole che  
nascono del fatto mio, sendo maschi, pot-  
rebbono essere giocatori, ruffiani, ladri,  
traditori, poltroni; e sendo femine, a la men  
trista, puttane." (Act V, sc. iii)

"Friends, there is nothing else to be said  
if not that these children that you want me  
to father could be gamblers, pimps, thieves,  
traitors, cowards, if boys; and, if girls, at  
best, whores."

His view toward his own homosexuality is tinged with pessimism. When Jacopo shows off the fruit of his own marriage (his son) and orates self-centeredly about his this son serves him ("he makes my decisions, he serves me, he guides me," Act V, sc. i), Marescalco is moved by the idea of a talented and helpful son who

could accompany him through the loneliness of old age. His answer to Jacopo's speech, which makes conspicuous use of the word "hope" ("sperare"), betrays a wistfulness for another kind of life and exposes Marescalco's self-image as one deprived:

"... io non sono di questi avventurati,  
che possa sperare d'averne un tale."  
(Act V, sc. i)

"... I am not one of those lucky ones,  
who can hope of having such (a son)."

We are now equipped to observe the progression of Marescalco's personality throughout the body of the play.

When Marescalco hears for the first time that the Duke of Mantua has decreed that he be married, he takes it lightly, dismissing it as "courtly chatter." When Giannicco<sup>5</sup> insists that it is in reality a serious matter, he calls the boy "crazy" and graduates to making an ironic evaluation of the situation, "Oh, that would be just great," using the conditional — rather than the present-tense of the verb "to be." Jacopo's news about the generosity of the dowry involved fails to entice him, and in scene ii he declares for the first time that he will defy the decree. He then retreats into the world he knows best, the world of sick horses.<sup>6</sup>

Marescalco does not emerge again until scene vi, where he is listening to his nurse as she relates her dream about a cruel man who throws stones at a little songbird.<sup>7</sup> The songbird, by the nurse's own analysis, is Giannicco, who "speaks sweetly in favor of marriage," and the cruel man, of course, is the horse-doctor who refuses to listen to (everyone else's) reason.

This sophistry draws from Marescalco the first signs of paranoia ("I think the world enjoys my condition") and he accuses her of making fun of him. She answers him with the admonition that he abandon his wanton life; but she refuses to name the sin for which he must seek redemption by marriage. Instead, she refers to it as "child-

ish trifles."

By linking homosexuality to youth and immaturity, thus defining it as a stunting of emotional growth, she prefigures an attitude that was to become crystalized in Freudian theory. The nurse's attempt to nudge Marescalco from the phallic stage of sexual development to the genital stage, where the sexually mature individual is attracted to the external reproductive structures of the opposite sex, by means of a mawkish defense of heterosexual marriage, fails miserably.

Marescalco later delivers a soliloquy (Act I, sc. viii) in which he regrets that he did not become a shopkeeper; so intolerable is the treachery of the Duke of Mantua's court. Elsewhere (Act II, sc. iii) Marescalco likens the great lords to women in their perversity, women who "run after those who flee them and flee from those who chase them," and "take no greater pleasure than causing their servants despair." The entire play is, of course, a satire on courtly life, but the theme for the sensitive listener is sometimes eclipsed by the serious personal effect of courtly caprice upon the life of the protagonist.

The introduction of the pedant (Act I, sc. ix), a stock character usually associated with homosexuality in Renaissance theater, but here ironically dedicated to harassing the horse doctor's homosexuality, occasions reference to the New Testament and its emphasis on fertility and productivity. The tree that does not bear fruit, he recites, should be cut down and cast into the fire.

Ambrogio appears in Act II, sc. v, and although he begins by advising compliance with the ducal order, he eventually delivers the counter-argument to the nurse's pro-marriage speech. In response, Marescalco, who realizes he has found a little sympathy in a sea of single-minded opposition, becomes more amiable than we see him elsewhere in the entire play, as he says:

"Adesso si che io ti tracredo, a certo  
conosco che tu mi ami, e ti sono schiavo  
in eterno."

"Now I really believe you, and I know for certain that you are my friend, and I will be appreciative to you forever for it."

In the next scene, Marescalco states his desire to sleep with whomever he pleases — one of his few overt references to specific sexual practice — without the disapproval of a wife. To this, his nurse suggests that they invoke sorcery to conjure away his troubles, and Marescalco, at first hesitant, decides to try it. An entire scene (x) is devoted to their attempts to conjure away the Duke's decree. The horse-doctor finds it difficult to cope with the absurdity of the incantations, and he soon gives up. He swears that the day will dawn black and the night white before he will be led to the altar, at which point the nurse declares that she cannot help him, for he is entirely in the hands of the devil.

The choice of wedding jewelry dominates all of Act III. A Jewish vendor of bagatelles, at the instigation of Giannicco, tries to interest Marescalco in his wares for the upcoming wedding. This causes Marescalco to observe that now even the synagogues laugh at his misery; and it is in reaction to the Jew's insistent salespitch that he makes the threat of self-imposed exile.

In the second scene of Act IV, Giannicco describes to the farrier the official rings that have been chosen for the wedding — "one red as a cooked lobster, and the other green as the sauce served with it." The rings are red (the color of carnal lust, both heterosexual and homosexual) and green (the proverbial favorite color of homosexuals) and the images used by Giannicco to aid Marescalco's visualization of the rings seem especially chosen to demonstrate that his goose is cooked, and about to be eaten with sauce!

Act IV has more cajolery and argumentation to shake the farrier's determination, but by the beginning of the fifth act, his determination has given way to desperation. As the wedding ceremony appears to be closing in on him, Marescalco utters that he feels as if he is dying. But the complaint is dismissed flippantly by his hearers

as "childish fears." When he repeats the same sensation later, the Cavaliere responds with typical intolerance:

*"Questo e il piu nuovo caso del mondo; gli altri vedendo una bella donna risuscitano e questo more?"*

"This is incredible: Other men who see a beautiful woman come to life, and this one is dying?"

Unsure of himself and sorely afraid, he asks if his nurse and Giannicco are there at his side. Both are there, but neither deigns to answer him directly. Giannicco moralizes to him that "other Giannicos are not to be found easily," i.e., that one cannot escape by means of homosexuality all of one's life, because willing "pivi" are not always available.<sup>8</sup>

In a final attempt to curtail the marriage ceremony, the farrier claims suddenly that he has a hernia, and that therefore he is unfit as a husband. His manner of making this claim — "I am open" (*"Io sono aperto"*) — is fertile ground for Freudian speculation. That this was not the normal means of stating the problem in sixteenth century Tuscan Italian is shown by the intentional misunderstanding of Cavaliere, who tells him to shut himself up, if he is open. If the phrase is ambiguous and vulnerable to a pun, and if in other instances Marescalco has proven himself not one to pussyfoot with euphemisms, why does he say it in this way? Human sexual relations depend upon a mortise-and-tenon effect, and by claiming that he is open and not protruding with the excitement of the forthcoming marital delights, he demonstrates his feminine aspect and underscores in yet another way the fact that he is being mismatched.

At everyone's insistence, however, Marescalco goes through with the ceremony. At length, he discovers the real (masculine) gender of his "bride," and takes the joke well, saying:

*". . . egli e meglio che io veggia ridere*

voi per le bugie, che voi pianger me per  
l a verita." (Act V, sc. x)

"... it is better that I hear your laughter  
over a lie, than my own crying over the  
truth."

Exhilaration, then, wins out over bitterness, and Marescalco is seen in the final instance as a fair-minded individual (worthy of the decency Jacopo has attributed to him previously) who wants merely the freedom to live life his own way. However, since this way of life does not have societal approbation and because he is expected to follow another, more acceptable course of behavior, he has been the victim of societal harassment. He refuses to dissemble what he is, and under the strain, becomes paranoid and self-pitying. He is generally short on patience, although not incapable of self-restraint, and in the latter half of the play makes threats

upon his own life and comfort.

His reaction to the decree that he marry progresses from a flippant dismissal of the news as rumor to a genuine frenzy ("I am sweating and I am freezing," Act V, sc. x). In spite of his resolution not to marry or compromise his homosexuality, he feels anomalous. He begins to view his destiny as punishment for his faults, and Jacopo's speech about the comforts of having a son stir him deeply. Of the four words that Marescalco applies to himself for having been duped by the decree — "castrone (gelding), bue (ox), *bufalo* (buffalo), *scempio* (simpleton)" — the first two specifically imply sexual incompleteness.

Thus, like many homosexuals then and now, Marescalco feels a great sense of guilt for his condition, and the norms of his society have been successful in breaking down his own self-image. But at least the play ends with the possibility of a changed life and a new happiness for Marescalco.

#### NOTES

1. John Addington Symonds, *The Renaissance in Italy, The Age of the Despots* (London: John Murray, 1923), p. 498.
2. Paget Toynbee, *A Dictionary of Personal Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante* (Oxford at Clarendon Press, 1968) *sub Brunetto Latini*.
3. Symonds, pp. 373-74.
4. Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 11.
5. Giannicco, who is Marescalco's catamite, does not seem to be homosexual himself, although seems misogynistic at times. As with Marescalco's nurse who sees in the new mistress the "comfort of her old age," Giannicco too looks to his own material advantage; while the new wife will lure "beautiful young men" who will keep the Marescalco busy, Giannicco will be able to enjoy her carnally.
6. Marescalco is a horse-doctor and if we might think it atypical in terms of a stereotype, it need only be recalled that in the symbology of the unconscious, the horse often occurs as a surrogate phallus.
7. The phallic nature of the bird is obvious from puns and metaphors in other parts of the play.
8. Giannicco is called "*pivi*," which in 16th century Italian slang meant "kept boy." The word is interesting etymologically for it seems to have developed from *pica*, "bagpipe," by way of a genital metaphor. The semantic progression from "penis" to "boy" is not uncommon in etymology.

by Dean Hartley

# The Shooting Stage

"We didn't need voices . . . we had faces then."

—Gloria Swanson, "Sunset Boulevard"

"Glamorous faces appear and disappear. All the great names . . . I wake up fearful and sad. The faces are sad . . . The sadness of great fame. The famous movie dead. Dead but not dead . . . never really dead."

—"The Bucky Wunderlick Story" by Don DeLillo

Fat.

Minked.

Impacted in *maquillage*,

. . . surveys a set

Struck from *The Snake Pit*.

The rest home abuts on La Cahengua Blvd.  
Signs like neon popsicle flash hyperbole

above blue astro-turf:

"FILMLAND'S FINEST."

A blocked artery of the L.A. Freeway

nooses the grounds,

Closing around her swollen heart—

King Kong's asphalt fist.

Caked in Liz Arden

flour on grey dough

She spins round the patio

Like Lillian Gish in that damn closet.

Locked in her wheelchair; stockaded;

A yearling bull, horns shaved

waiting the gate to lift.

The sun bakes her where it finds her;

Morning smogs warm old bones.

She moves in the smell of a bearded clam,

Wiping away a grey mustache of sweat

Beneath orange plastic orchids on wire vines.

Resentful,

Black tongue extruding—a viscous snail—

She shields her mask with back issues

of *Variety*; *Movieland*; the *Cosmo* fold-out;

Flashes paste emeralds at the golden interloper;

Calls out for Rin-Tin-Tin to savage a god.

Once he came to bronze her;

Remains to lave her with dry kisses.

She withers at his touch; cracks

under his rough caress like a child.

*Fly, fly the feverish contact, fly!*  
*The floating hair, the flashing eye*  
    act like an emetic.  
So she avoids him.  
The orchidacious trellis,  
    (reassembled from *White Sister*)  
Will do for a cabana.

There is never enough time between Rest Periods  
And the Jacuzzi Bath to answer all her fanmail.  
She complains of this, and other things,  
To gentle, faceless voices, who remind her  
That her fans are bill-collectors, honey.

Stunned, dunned, she retreats  
    to the barbed-wire parametric--  
Where she forgets. And always comes back  
    in time for monstrous lunches.

Sometimes—with favorite nurses—  
    warts of stale butter-brickle  
    pimpling her hairy chinny-chin  
She will reminisse:  
Shrug off the fake-fur chubby,  
    raise the croak a hemiquaver  
    to rasp the hinge of imagination,  
Mug for the camera, and wrap the world  
    with song.

She is still flustered by close-ups,  
But has this little thing she does,  
    sometimes,  
With her hands.  
Her hands are slim and lively,  
But need a good going-over  
    with emery boards and lava pumice  
To hide those liver spots.

They hear her at night, singing her hits  
In nodal baritone, back in her room.  
Or perhaps she is crying.  
They are never sure—  
    *that horrible sound!*—  
So it all goes on the charts.

Sunday is Visitors' Day.  
She expects no-one Sundays, and no-one comes.  
She is not disappointed.  
Pointed out by other inmates  
    sometimes  
Those long afternoons—  
She makes a *moue*, exposing abscessed teeth,  
    the black gums  
Of terminal tooth decay.  
Or she'll display the useless legs  
    dangling from strings:  
    hams on the butcher's hook.  
(Visitors sometimes look—or look  
    away).

She fears that it's her age,  
Creeping up like Valentino  
On desert tents where she once lay  
    nude and reticent,  
Counterflexed on ochre cushions,  
Coiled like a spring for the quick thrust,  
    the campy put-down.

*Will death take her?*  
Sometime.  
*Will Rudy forgive the smell?*

Give her name at the front desk,  
Outside the cage.  
Hear faceless voices say:  
Oh. Yes—  
We'll page—  
*That way*—  
    she's at the shooting stage.

---

DEAN HARTLEY, the Humanities coordinator  
of the last Gaythink at Long Beach State,  
teaches English there.

# Living Purgatory: Gay and in Prison

by Peter Dunham



It began innocently enough. Dale and I were sitting in my semi-darkened cell talking when I felt his hand on my crotch. That simple and beautiful gesture marked the inauguration of a fulfilling life as a homosexual and signaled a relationship that would span many years and result in additional years of imprisonment, culminating in a stipulation on my parole that was both inhumane and illegal. It would result in our separation and brutal treatment; in transfers and humiliation; in stolen moments of pleasure in an underground rendezvous where we consummated our love away from the watchful eyes of the guards.

The year was 1965. I had just been transferred from a mid-California institution to a minimum security facility in Southern California. Dale, who I'd met only after my arrival at the minimum facility, had preceded me by only a few weeks. I first noticed and spoke to this beautiful young man of twenty-two several weeks after my arrival. It would be a long six months until that night in the cell when he first conveyed to me his sexuality and opened up a carefully guarded desire which I harbored and feared.

We forgot about our incarceration that first night, and many nights thereafter, as we enjoyed the love and warmth of each other's person and body. Since we both suffered from extreme paranoia that our love would become known to our imprisoned peers, we went to great lengths to keep our relationship hidden. Like the thieves who surrounded us (Dale and I were not in prison for theft) we jealously guarded each moment, each touch, each act of love with a ferocity unknown to either of us before.

To understand the barriers we both had to overcome to consummate our love relationship, let me tell you briefly about both of us. Dale, an only child, was suffering his first term of imprisonment for being an accomplice of another young man who hailed from his hometown in a suburb of San Diego. He had maintained an on-again-off-again homosexual relationship with another his age for six years beginning at the age of fifteen. He was shy, introverted, painfully bashful and extremely ashamed of his sexuality. Coming to prison only reinforced his shame and added a new dimension: fear. Fear that he would be exposed through some act, gesture or word

as a homosexual to his fellow prisoners.

Fear? Justifiable fear because of the strange double standard that prevails between gays and "straights," a double standard and often violence.

Passive, female-role-playing gays in prison — those who are generally labeled queers, fruits, sissies and other absurd names — are the objects of verbal and physical abuse at the hands of male-role-playing "aggressive" homosexuals. Why? The catch is, all too often, the "aggressive" gay in prison, often a man who began practicing homosexuality in prison by letting a "queen" suck his rod, denies his sexuality, and insists both to himself and his peers that he is straight.

This brings me to my background. I began as a "heterosexual - who-refused-to-accept-his-sexuality" because I was young and rather attractive when I entered prison at 18. Rather than become forced into a passive sexual role which scared me to death, I immediately adopted a macho image. I swaggered when I walked. I ran with a group of toughs. I sought out the companionship of an effeminate gay and let it be known in all circles that "she" was my "old lady." I was not gay; my "old lady" was. And I would fight anyone who even hinted that I might be gay.

For ten years I continued to participate as a "spectator" rather than a "participant." I kept this distinction in my mind as my various effeminate partners continued to commit fellatio on me or while screwing some young, attractive known homosexual. I never consciously desired, for years, to actively commit the act of fellatio or be the recipient of anal intercourse. I made it clear to my curious peers who was fucking who!

Then I met Dale. I was ill-prepared, because of my paranoia with prison-bred hang-ups, to enter into a two-way relationship with either male or female.

Over the months that followed, in which my newly discovered emotion of love slowly eroded my hang-ups, I was able gradually to divorce myself from my aversion to participating mutually in a sexual act. I still retained some modicum of my old self in disallowing anal intercourse to be performed on me by Dale although

we mutually engaged in fellatio.

Suddenly it happened! We were discovered one night having sex in my cell by a guard who was barely able to disguise his glee over catching us in a compromising position. We were quickly locked up in separate cells and taken the next day before the disciplinary committee. We were adjudged guilty and told to cease seeing each other, an impossible request.

We took our love underground. The prison had a large boiler room with a labyrinth of tunnels carrying the pipes throughout the prison complex. We would separately walk to the boiler room and when none of the inmate or civilian staff working there were looking, we'd descend into the tunnels, where we continued to enjoy each other's company. We continued like this for many months, and it was only the act of one of the so-called "straights" who wished to force himself on Dale that resulted in the dissolution of our relationship at that institution. A letter that I had sent via courier to Dale while recuperating in the prison hospital was turned over to the authorities and we were again charged with "immorality." This time, the institution staff acted swiftly and barbarously by transferring me to another institution.

We were physically separated, but I wasn't deterred. I promptly sought out a fellow inmate working on the prison newspaper at the institution to which I had been sent. I cajoled him into placing letters to my lover in each week's edition of the prison paper which was then sent out with the regular subscriptions. This continued for nearly three months until a check was made of the mailouts against the subscription list and our underground mail system was discovered. I was quickly placed in solitary and transferred to the state's maximum security institution for punishment.

Since it was impossible to correspond with Dale directly, I enlisted the assistance of several wonderful friends who acted as both mail receivers and forwarders for both incoming and outgoing letters to Dale. We were able to maintain contact this way until his release some six

months after my initial transfer from the institution where our relationship had been exposed.

But our problems weren't over yet.

Prison regulations forbade a prisoner writing an ex-prisoner, so attempts to communicate by mail directly with Dale were rebuffed. My letters were all returned by the officials. In desperation, and with the aid of an attorney/friend, we were able to work out a female pseudonym under which Dale and I were able to express our love for one another without arousing the suspicion of the mail censor.

A year later, with good behavior, I was transferred from the maximum security institution to another less restrictive. Personal family problems dictated that I escape from the prison's farm unit where I was housed, and after some strenuous planning and careful execution, we were together.

Together! It had been four years since that night in the cell and the tender caress. Much had happened to both of us, individually and collectively. But our union was spoiled by the awareness that I was a fugitive, hunted by every law enforcement agency in the State. We knew that our dreams for permanency and settling down would one day be marred by my arrest and return to prison. That day came in early 1970.

I was arrested and returned to prison. Again we continued to correspond with each other by having Dale use the female pen name. We spoke of our dreams for the future. We made plans that hinged only on my release from prison at an unknown date.

The day finally arrived. I was granted a parole. Bubbling with joy, I placed a special phone call to Dale to let him know I was being released legally. He shared my happiness, a joy that was his as well as mine. We would be together again.

The months crawled by as the release date approached. Slowly the weeks passed, one long day at a time. Long, long days. Days full of longing and desire. Of anticipation and love. Two weeks remained until my release when the guard passed my cell one evening and delivered a letter. It was addressed to me and carried the

familiar pen-name Dale used in the upper left-hand corner.

Excitedly I opened the letter. As I read the words my eyes began to blur, my sight impaired by tears. Dale was telling me in the kindest possible way that although he had been waiting for me for months—no, years—he had recently met someone and he wanted us to become merely friends. He and the other man were now sharing the love relationship that we had enjoyed. I was numb with disbelief as I continued reading where he said: "And I hope we can remain friends. You mean more to me than anyone."

The rest is history. We had discovered, love, happiness, and, most important, ourselves in the five years we had been intermittently together. We shared some beautiful moments. We had overcome tremendous odds and obstacles in the propagation of our love. We had discovered, in a prison cell, what many people never find: genuine love.

Every man should be so lucky.

#### EPILOGUE

1972. I was released and frequently visited Dale and his new lover. A metamorphosis had occurred during the two years Dale and I were apart. He had discovered a new identity and was no longer the shy, self-effacing person I had met in 1965. He was more masculine and aggressive. His lover had many of the qualities that Dale had when I first met him. They were happy and in love and I wished them well.

In the two years that followed my release from prison, I sought that special someone. I wasn't free to do it openly, however, any more than I was able to in prison. The reason? The State's Department of Correction placed a stipulation on me that ordered I not "knowingly associate or reside with homosexuals." It was necessary, as it had been in prison, to keep my sexuality disguised, to constantly deny to my parole agent that I was a practicing homosexual. I felt the parole stipulation unjust and it wasn't until I was accused of violating that condition of my parole in concert with several other equally

inane "technical violations," and returned to prison in July, 1974, that something occurred to change it.

While a Superior Court Judge in San Diego ruled the condition "unconstitutional," it remained a part of the record that has resulted in my imprisonment, imprisonment that will continue until March, 1977, unless an appeal before the State's highest court results in my being released before then. Arguments were heard from my attorney and the State's Attorney General's Office on December 3, 1975, and an opinion should be forthcoming in a few weeks or months.

The subject of that parole violation is a sensitive, attractive twenty-four-year-old male who waits for me outside the high wire fence and concrete and steel walls that surround me. Andy, whose separation from the Navy was brought about by our relationship—the papers of which spearation were used as documents to "prove" I had violated the condition about "residing or associating with homosexuals"—joins me in again marking the months, weeks and days off our respective calendars. It is not necessary for us to disguise our correspondence. He is beyond the pall of the prison system's capacity to dehuman-

ize and crush the free expression of love manifested by gays in prison, and I no longer worry about sheltering my sexuality from the prison administration although I still remain discreet about this matter with my peers.

I'm confident that laws protecting sexual conduct between consenting adults will protect us once I am released, regardless of when it occurs. A group of attorneys and fellow writers is ready and willing to challenge any attempt to burden me with archaic and illegal parole conditions.

For those still seeking love and a relationship in a California prison, the harsh dictate of the Director's Rule, #1105, makes it clear that a new State law notwithstanding, the practice of homosexuality in prison is still verboten. The Director's Rule reads:

"You must not participate in illegal sexual acts. You must avoid situations which might lead to illicit sexual conduct."

Gay and in prison, a type of purgatory.

PETER DUNHAM is a prisoner in Soledad; he has published over a hundred articles in a variety of publications.

## The Big-Mouth

by Aaron Cohen

We used some daisies  
as a still-life model in my class.  
And someone tried to spoil my pleasure  
when he said  
"Watch out, you may get raped"  
as I was leaving to take them home.  
How did he know  
I meant them  
as an invitation?

AARON COHEN, a New Yorker, has published in *Mouth of the Dragon*.

# Sixty Nine

by Rolf Jarlsson

"I saw you get washed away this afternoon." The guy who spoke to the man looked as though he might be twenty-five, but the smooth skin of his forehead was scored by fine, hairline wrinkles. He was a boy growing older. He would be a man who appears to be, from a distance or in the dim light, a boy until he's bald and fifty. The guy and the man had been cruising each other; their eyes, curious at first, were now hungry. The guy moved up from the end of the bar to the man.

"It took me by surprise," the man said. "I thought I was far enough from the water and all at once this wave is on top of me."

"I was sitting on the deck of the house behind you," the guy said. "I was afraid you might be asleep out there on the beach."

As the guy talked he put his foot on the bar rail and eased his knee to the man's leg. The man turned on his bar stool, pressed his thigh against the knee. It was late, Tuesday night had become Wednesday morning, there weren't many people in The Grove, not many boozers in the bar. It was quiet and the guy and the man talked about the weekly invasion of Sunday day-trippers who littered a section of the beach with beer cans, snotted kleenex, chunks of hamburger bun, knots of dog shit, aluminum foil, and condoms. While they talked the man's hand moved from the guy's knee to his upper thigh.

"Are you going to be here for another drink?" the guy asked.

"This is one of my nights to stay out late," the man answered.

"Wait for me until I get back, okay?" the guy said.

The man said he would wait. In half an hour the guy was back with some grass. They couldn't smoke near the bar and went down beside the bay and sat on the stub end of one of the cross-island boardwalks. The spot was isolated, hidden by beds of high rushes that crowded the walk on both sides, arched over it and broke and fell across the planks in tangles of stems and leaves. The guy stroked the back of his hand along the man's leg; his touch was remote, distracted, his mind elsewhere. They didn't talk while they shared the joint, they listened to the wind hissing through the dry leaves of the rushes.

The man knew. "Is your friend away?" he asked.

"I didn't know it showed," the guy said. He was silent for a moment. "Yes, he's gone. This time for keeps, I think."

"I'm sorry," said the man.

"It's been on the way," the guy said, "so it's no greak shock."

"Somebody else?" the man asked.

"A twenty-two-year-old kid who looks about sixteen," the guy answered.

"That hurts," the man said.

"When I was that age I thought it was fun to stir up trouble," the guy said. "Now I guess it's my turn." The guy reached into his shirt pocket, drew out the Sucrets box, picked a joint and lit a match. In the flare of firelight the man saw the sadness brimming in the guy's eyes. "Well," the guy said, "I hope you don't mind sloppy seconds."

"It's been so long," the man answered, "that I can't remember the last time I worried about that."

When they stood up to leave, the man slid his arms under the guy's armpits, embraced him and kissed his lips. The guy drew himself closer against the man and lifted his face, his lips parted. When the man kissed him again the guy offered his tongue to the man's mouth. "Are you in a hurry?" the guy asked.

"Not at all," the man answered. "What about you?"

"Sometimes it's nice to wait," said the guy.

"Fine by me," said the man; he knew the guy needed to be hot and wild.

On their way back to the bar at The Monster they passed a beach house with sliding glass panel doors facing the board walk. On a tabaret inside, directly beneath an overhead lamp, was a large blue and white basin, oyster porcelain, filled with glistening silver-green eucalyptus leaves and masses of red roses and white Annunciation lilies. They stopped for a moment, the man put an arm around the guy's shoulders to comfort him.

When they arrived at the bar a dozen or so of the night's survivors were dancing in the small patch of floor in front of the juke box. The man and the guy watched and after a couple of swallows of his drink the guy joined the dancers. The guy was loose, lithe; his body and the music flowed in a sinuous stream of sound and movement. The guy made a few raunchy motions, and encouraged by the others did a few bumps and grinds. They hooted to incite him, but before the record was finished he broke off abruptly and went back to the bar. He wanted to go outside, so the man picked up the guy's glass and his

own and they went out into the garden where they were alone. They sat on a long bench in a secluded corner; the guy stretched out and lay his head in the man's lap. The man brushed the guy's hair away from his face and back from his forehead.

"Is that all?" the guy asked when the man withdrew his hand.

The man unbuttoned the guy's shirt and opened the fly of his jeans; the guy gave his body to the man's aggressive, groping fingers.

"When I leave here," the guy said, "I usually take along a drink, get a towel and go down to the water. Does that interest you?"

"I'd like it," said the man. "I'm very romantic."

On their way out they stopped at the bar, where Sven made them double vodka tonics in plastic beakers. They picked up a blanket and two towels from the man's room at the Inn and went to the beach. The guy held the man's hand as they walked along the surf out past the seaside houses to the dunes. In a low place between two dunes they spread the blanket and lay down. They sipped some of their drink, and the guy lay his head on the man's stomach while they smoked and gazed up at planets and constellations, suns shining in other universes. When the joint burned out the guy snuggled against the man, settled his head between the man's chest and upper arm; they dozed.

When the man awakened the moon was far down, a glowing wafer in a burnt orange smudge on the empty horizon. The guy stirred, the man tugged him closer, the guy pulled the man over himself, embraced him with arms and legs. They went down into the water, holding hands walking into the breakers, ducked under the swells, waded, floated and drifted, stood up dripping salt foam and climbed out, the spent waves clutching at their ankles. Sea-wet bodies enclosed in arms, aroused, they smeared their faces with kisses and saliva. They lay down, nestled into each other, and when they left the depression gouged in the cool, damp sand by their frenzy was soon rubbed smooth, washed out by the morning tide.

# Born Again

by Rolf Jarlsson

We touch  
discreetly on the beach,  
walking to dinner  
hold hands,  
share a hug  
with our brandy  
at the bar.

We stroll,  
on our islet  
in the marsh  
unbuckled belts,  
flies unzipped.  
Greedily  
I caress your tail,  
your fingers  
are hungry  
in my crotch.

A boy's cunt  
is futile.  
I erupt  
in your belly  
but nothing grows.  
Not so.  
Our flesh  
yields no fruit,  
but you are fertile.

You purge me.  
Your innocence  
rips my heart's rot.  
Your questions  
nag my deceptions.  
Your hurt  
claws my callousness.  
Your erotic simplicity  
dissolves my guilt.  
Your candid lust  
melts my impotence.

You make me new.  
Cocking my love in you  
life pours through me  
hot and fresh.  
Between your ardent thighs  
you've borne me  
a second youth,  
out of your guts  
I've begot the man  
who once was me.

ROLF JARLSSON, of New York, has published  
before in *Gay Literature* (#5).

by Joseph Butkie

# He Responded

first

to my twelve dollar and sixty five cent personal  
in a pink envelope with no return  
address. The stationery was high-priced  
erasable bond  
with not one eraser smudge  
mistake in a five line  
single spaced message.

SWM, 35, 6'2", 190 (no  
flab), brown hair, blue eyes, light S/M, B/D, plus w/s, scat.  
Discreetly yours,

Kyle

(P.S. Telephone office: 351-8092, afternoons Mon. thru Fri.)

My sameday call  
brought late that evening  
a TV weatherman in checkered summersuit  
with no underwear  
who tossed sweaty clothes in a heap  
on my deskchair, belched lasagna  
garlic as he plopped  
on my hard mattress, shoving me  
onto the wooden floor in prayer  
position. Immediately pissed  
on my oily hair, gave me a belt buckle  
spanking, squeezed  
his tongue far  
up my ass, smeared vaseline on a finger, sucked  
my untrimmed big toes, and before showering, shit  
on my flabby abdomen, smearing tic-tac-toe  
stains on both cheeks,  
warpaint.  
Had to hurry.  
The wife was waiting up for him  
tonight.  
The next evening I saw him  
on the educational channel.

# Paydays

by Joseph Butkie

Everyday  
on her wrinkled sickbed  
she parted my hair  
in a straight line  
with her pink comb,  
half the teeth missing.

Once a week,  
after school let out,  
I waited to taste the breadwinner's  
(Grandpa's) private parts  
on Friday. Only  
after he scrubbed off  
all the coaldust with Lava,  
splashed on the lime aftershave,  
brushed his 'salt and pepper' flecked crewcut,  
and tapped out our code carefully  
on the attic door.

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JOSEPH BUTKIE has moved to California from the Midwest and is seeking employment, preferably as an English teacher. He has published in *The Berkeley Barb* and *GPU News*.

by Vern Haddick

## Colors in the Carpet

Among the many images which Henry James wove into three dozen volumes, that of a figure in the carpet of his writings has provoked most extensive debate. Several critics have felt that the special pattern must represent James's commitment to his art, his determination to "dramatize, dramatize" brilliantly every idea which he served with his pen. Others have found the shape in question to be the journey motif, weighted with both literal and subjective implications. Still others have argued that James's attempt to explore the dark depths of human nature was the secret he hoped perceptive readers would discover. Certainly all three purposes figure in many of James's books, but they don't exhaust the range of plausibilities. So now in the post-Stonewall quarter of the century it seems time to recognize another implicit form, of yet another color, which most commentators have studiously overlooked throughout the decades since James passed away in 1916.

A few critics have noticed "Henrietta" James's need for meticulous order and elaborate style in both his writings and personal relationships. Several others have glanced at the excessive care James took to conceal details of his private life—and the many friends he had in the gay set at the turn of the century. Leon Edel in the last volumes of his biography states more openly some implications of James's relationship with the young sculptor Hendrik Andersen, and his cultivation of a circle of acolytes who attended him as "The Master". However Edel, also, declines to pursue the observation that James may

have been homosexual; he dismisses the case with a remark that secrets of the Victorian bedroom cannot be probed at this time, and does not attempt to relate his clue to a general life picture or a larger meaning in James's work.

Yet the patterns detected in James's writings by earlier observers do not conflict with the presence there of another half-concealed, half-revealed figure — the record of a gay life experience. The great concern for form and finish, both in social arrangements and art, raises little difficulty. Nor does the ceaseless travel, which James's characters (like the novelist himself) follow away from unsatisfactory childhood homes in search of richer, more tolerant surroundings. Likewise, aspects of the psychological realm as James depicts it take on some new meaning when considered as an expression of a gay outlook. For example, the absence of satisfactory heterosexual marriages in the range of stories as a whole may rest upon an especially dispassionate observation of exchanges between men and women. And the numerous men who remain bachelors even when offered what their fellows consider highly desirable mates may express a deep personal choice to avoid intimate relations with women. But even more to the point than such recurrent motifs of character and behavior are the series of what can be taken as authentically gay stories and novels, considering the period and circumstances in which they were written. Together they produce another distinctive figure in the carpet that James wove.

The earliest of the tales is *A Light Man* (1869),

which records the experience of a young adventurer, Maximus Austin. Max returns from Europe to look up his friend Theodore Lisle and finds him living an easy life as companion of rich, elderly Frederick Sloane. Max grows envious of Theodore's good luck and seeks to make a place for himself in Sloane's affections. The old man responds, and soon the former friends are enemies, each vying to become Sloane's sole heir. Yet in the end, through their rivalry, both lose out; and so the fortune is left to a distant female relative of the old bachelor. Interestingly, James uses a similar struggle for the money of a dying friend as plot-line in the late novels *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Ivory Tower*; and, although in both cases he recasts the contestants in straight roles, he leaves the balance of sympathy on the side of the male participant.

James reused the same theme of a kept friend in two major novels of the decade following *A Light Man* without transforming it into heterosexual terms. In *Roderick Hudson* (1875) the wealthy itinerant, Rowland Mallet, takes the young sculptor Roderick to Italy to finish his education there. For a while they lead a happy life together in Rome, until Hudson's egocentricity and impulsiveness cause him to follow the coquettish Christina Light to Switzerland, where he falls to his death during a snowstorm. In *The Bostonians* (1885) the situation is worked out in terms of two women. The wealthy feminist Olive Chancellor makes outright purchase of young, pretty, simple Verena Tarrant, whom she develops as housemate and co-worker in the feminist cause. Eventually, however, Verena comes under the influence of a lawyer-journalist, Basil Ransom, who lures her away to a mediocre marriage. So at the close Olive Chancellor, like Rowland Mallet, is left alone and unhappy. But again it is interesting to notice that when James translates this motif of a purchased companion into straight terms in *The American*, *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Golden Bowl* he leaves the struggle unresolved and suggests that the futures of the mixed couples may be even more bleak than the loneliness of the separated gay couples.

Not a great deal is known about James's personal and inner life during these early periods; but he traveled much and lived (apparently alone) in France, Italy and England. In the gay segment of his work at the time he seemed unable to express the hope of any more meaningful enduring relationship between same-sex couples than between mixed pairs, even though he saw the latter as more desolate.

In two stories of the following decade, however, he advances the possibility of happy masculine life together, even though he does not picture it directly. In *Brooksmith* (1891) he tells about a faithful butler who has served his master contentedly for many years, then sinks into oblivion after the older man dies and leaves him without further purpose in the world. And in *The Pupil* (also 1891) he recores the experience of a young tutor, Pemberton, who endures many hardships and humiliations in order to stay with his brilliant, delicate pupil Morgan Moreen. Yet in the end the Moreen family goes bankrupt, and through a misunderstanding Morgan fears that his tutor will desert him. The pupil dies of a heart attack just when Pemberton is planning to set up their household together.

Then in another pair of tales written over the next several years James depicts the chance of fulfilled gay relationship in unequivocal terms. In *The Middle Years* (1893) he shows an aging novelist, Denscombe, tended lovingly by young Dr. Hugh, who has given up a profitable situation with a wealthy dowager in order to attach himself to Denscombe. And in *Collaboration* (1892) he gives his fullest picture of a productive gay alliance. In it a young French poet, Felix Vendermer, becomes fascinated by the music and person of a young German composer, Herman Heidenmauer. So Felix breaks his engagement to a countrywoman and, just after the Franco-Prussian war, settles down with his new friend to lead the artist's life together. All indications are that they find happiness together also, in their cottage on the Riviera where they work side by side at libretto and music of the opera which is to be the first issue of their union.

It seems fitting that in the decade of the 1890's James at last became able to picture a couple of happy pairs among the hundreds of restless travelers who populate his stories and to paint one instance of domestic collaboration amidst all the incompatability which was his usual theme; for at this period of his life, according to Edel's facts, James apparently came to full acceptance of his gay impulse and invited the young sculptor to live and work with him at his home in Ryle. Their relationship lasted only a couple of years, but, as Edel recognizes, James came out of it with a permanently enriched sense of human possibilities — a sense which is reflected in the gay character who fills a central role in *The Awkward Age* (1898).

That character, Mitchy or Mitchett, is rich, bright and young, but also homely and overtly gay, while situated in the middle of brilliant, erotic London drawing-room society. His lover, Lord Petherton, sponges off his fortune, and his other associates use him both emotionally and intellectually. Yet Mitchy remains one of the most sympathetic persons in the novel, strong and stable beneath the clownish behavior that he adopts in order to transform his unhappiness into fun (at least in others' eyes) and to contain his emotions within a manageable framework. He seems to draw vitality from having faced the fact that he doesn't fit into any recognized social category of the time, and doesn't aspire to; therefore, he sees the conventions for what they are and laughs them away ironically as he trusts to his own inner guidelines. Mitchett, portrayed as the one steadfast, clearheaded individual in his corrupt world, is an interesting prototype of gay characters used as criteria for evaluating their associates in later works by other writers — such as *The Counterfeitors*, *The World in the*

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VERN HADDICK is an administrator of a graduate school of international relations in San Francisco.

DENNIS GARY writes poetry in San Francisco.

*Evening* and *A Taste of Honey*.

Perhaps the character Mitchett expresses the way James came to see himself during the last decades of life, when he had pursued his voyage of self-understanding as far as he could, and was taken as "The Master" by the small entourage which read his books and as a humorous mutation by the conventional society rushing into a twentieth century filled with materialism and violence. By then, however, James had woven the preferred colors into his carpet, and had let it to posterity to make what it can of the half-revealed, half-concealed figures he has created there.

## Queenie's Delight

by Dennis Gary

Queenie's delight  
Is just out of sight  
Strange cars parking  
Out in the night

From behind bushes  
Queenie peeps out  
The lone stranger hushes  
Looking about

Queenie peeps out  
The stranger peeps in  
They do not shout  
They're centered on sin

Queenie's in no condition  
For an act of contrition

—from QUEER SONNETS FROM A FELT PEN

# Ring of Roses

by Rolf Jarlsson

There's no fool  
like an old gay  
who pricks his fingers  
twisting wild roses  
in a love crown for a boy.

Twenty two,  
seething in soul and gonads,  
you levy from a man  
twice your years and five  
homage of heart and cock  
to salve your spirit's anguish,  
soothe your body's fury.

You clown at the party,  
rose wreath over one ear,  
dance with waiters,  
flirt with the host,  
slop wine on your shirt  
(white Chinese silk),  
and on your way home  
take off your jeans.

We watch a late late show,  
you pick apart my roses,  
sprawled naked on the floor,  
lick each petal and pinkly dot  
your body lean, forehead to feet.

At sun up you'll want sex,  
immolation, sacrifice:  
you'll give yourself to me,  
father surrogate and God;  
with guilt and wrath appeased  
surrender then to tenderness,  
to ecstasy of paternal lust,  
and to healing sleep.

# The Boy Next Door

by Geoffrey Talbert

The boy next door  
has just come back  
from playing tennis  
with his buddy,  
a tall, strapping blond  
with hardly any  
acne.

I hear  
the water pouring  
out the pipe  
as he soaps himself  
and rubs his hand firmly  
across his chest muscles.

And if I could  
I'd walk  
right thru the wall  
that separates us  
and complete the job  
that he began  
when he turned  
the water on.

---

GEOFFREY TALBERT lives in Long Beach,  
California.

by Laura Lechenger

# Figure /Ground

If you want to know how did I become a lesbian and why did I quotes give up on men and that sort of crap you're going to be very disappointed with this because I'm not going to tell you. The answer to that should be obvious and even if it's not it's irrelevant anyway. What I am going to tell you, though, is how we quotes do it. This is how we do it: we use our imaginations. First she grabs hold of my imagination then I grab hold of hers. Sometimes of course it's the other way around. But you know what I mean. You've got one, too; every woman has. Also we do it with sticks and stones and coke bottles and broken bones but names will never hurt us. And we are an endless incestuous chain of mothers and daughters and mothers and daughters and good old woman wisdom and molest children. Some of our mothers are dead but they won't be for long. They died in childbirth, creating the world. This is a womanifesto for the back-to-the-womb movement.

Once upon a time a longlong time ago there was a little girlchild who loved her mother and sister very dearly and kicked the living shit out of her father. You are who you eat, she sed, and went to live in the Big Apple. She smoked and drank and cursed and committed unnatural acts with the coarser half of the dominant species but God did not strike her dead, which was a big mistake on His part. Now one day she was just taking care of business as usual and the three Wicked Witches got on her case. You know they were wicked because they went around turning perfectly good frogs into princes. Actually they were three transvestites and what can you expect from people like that? Insane sed the psychiatrist. Immoral sed the Dean of Women. Bad Publicity sed the president, and zippo-bang, out she went. Magic's got this nasty habit of backfiring on you if you don't know what you're about; a blessing's likely as not to turn into a curse and vice the verse. She put a dee on the front of her I Like Ike button and got the piss beat out of her by a woman with a contralto voice and a D.A. haircut. No bite without a bark, she decided, and switched to Gauloises and lace-up boots. Just when she was learning to spit on the sidewalk and make leaky tire noises at passers-by this thing started coming down Fifth Avenue. And you thought they only came out at night. High noon, and right down the middle of the street, too. Keerist they were funny-looking women, all shapes and sizes, flavors and colors, dressed like they'd just come down off a mountain. Glom sed the monster and swallowed her up. Somebody mussed up her Duck's Ass. Somebody kissed her in the ear. Why'd old Jonah ever want to leave that cosy old whale anyway, she pondered. Delicious, nutritious. Good, and good for you. Builds strong bodies twelve ways. This is a womanifesto for the back-to-the-womb movement. Back to bed on the lam. Are you washed? Are you saved? Amazing Grace, and Lillian too. And grace before grace, and desire before desire. Opposites attack; likes propel. I know you know you know you.

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LAURA LECHENGER is in the Poetry Workshop at Iowa.

by Tom Felt

# *One Side of the*

The young man at the back door held a handful of snapshots and he offered them, without speaking, to Margaret. He was smiling, as if this were a prank, and she wondered what it was all about. She didn't know him at all and he certainly was acting strangely, whoever he was.

She glanced down at the top photograph.

"What . . ."

The word was wrenched from her, involuntarily, and when she looked up again he had already run around to the side of the house. She didn't try to follow him. She closed the door and leaned heavily against it.

Filth. That's all it was. But why had he done this to her? Should she call the police? The snapshots had slipped from her hand, and she leaned dumbly to pick them up again. (She must destroy them before the kids came home from school. She wouldn't have that kind of thing in her house.) But then she froze, crouching, half on her knees, and felt the bile rise to her throat. Oh my god! No! The snapshots had fanned out on the floor and she stared at them, helpless and lost.

Later, still numb, she poured herself a straight scotch and sat in the near-darkness of the living

room. The alcohol scalded her throat and she was grateful for its warmth. She noted that her hands were trembling and she put down the glass and pressed them against her sides until her ribs ached.

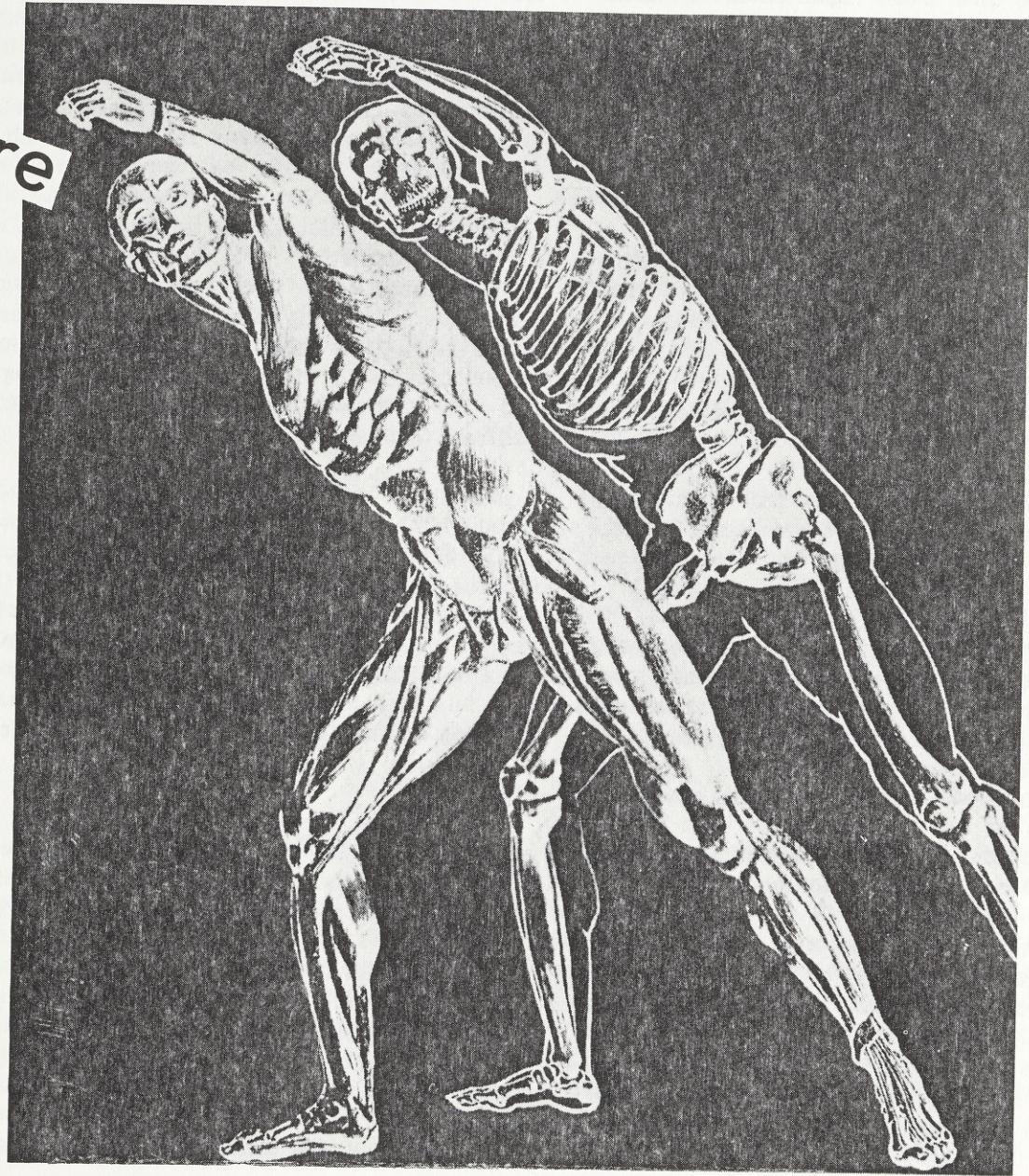
She kept thinking that the children would be home soon and that, somehow, they must be saved from this. But how? And, oh god, what were they all going to do now?

She felt the tears coming at last and they, in a way, soothed her a little. It was a luxury to cry, but she feared that, inevitably, it would give way to rage. She clutched herself, rocking back and forth and moaning silently, and when it was over, she took another sip of scotch.

And then the anger was there.

The top photograph, the one that had shocked her (but in a way that was curiously distant, as if she had been standing outside of herself and watching her own split-second reaction) had been of two men. It was not very clear, but it was obvious that they were both naked. The man closer to the camera was leaning over the other's erect penis, so that only his back could be seen. She supposed that the shots had been taken on some sort of Polaroid with a timing device; the

*Picture*



same two people were in all of the photographs, and one of them appeared to be the young man who had knocked at the door. (But why? Why had he been so cruel?)

The other man, who was fully visible in several of the other shots, was her husband. Oh god, how could he? Her mind repeated the question over and over.

She had locked the pictures away in a desk drawer. But not before they had been imprinted, indelibly, on her brain. Why? Why? Why?

Polaroid snapshots scattered on the kitchen floor, where they would forever remain . . .

When the kids came home, she was still sitting in the dark room. She pretended that she had fallen asleep.

"Mom?"

"I'm in here."

Does my voice sound normal? It must, please god, it must . . .

"Are you all right?"

And she explained, patiently, fearful that they might wonder why she didn't turn on the light. (She couldn't let them see her tear-stained face, not until she had had a chance to freshen up.)

"Oh."

It was Steven, the older one, and she could hear the doubt in his voice. He had always been the difficult one to convince, the one who did not believe in Santa Clause and who always prefaced every question with a blunt "why?"

It was Donnie, the younger one, who saved the situation.

"Hey, Mom, there's a carnival at the shopping center. Can Steve and I go down there?"

"Yeah, Mom. Can we?"

It was almost humorous, the way they both forgot whatever anxiety they must have felt at the strangeness of coming home to find their mother sitting in a darkened room.

She grasped at the straw. "Why don't you . . . I'm so tired tonight, why don't you take enough money to get yourselves something to eat while you're at it?"

They must have gaped at her, but she couldn't see their faces. They didn't wait around to puzzle out this latest quirk, however. Instead, they went clattering out to the kitchen to find her handbag, and she called after them, "Get something sensible! And don't fill yourselves up with candy! And don't stay out too late!"

But even as she said it, she was hoping that they would stay out late, and something inside her was shocked by this. She didn't like the children to run around the streets alone and normally she would never let them go out this close to dark.

Normally . . .

There was a catch in her throat.

"Thanks, Mom!"

They didn't come back into the room and she heard them distantly, shouting at each other with shrill voices, as they ran around the side of the house and out to the street. As that young man had run around the side of the house, earlier, had run, had run, had run . . .

She didn't know what time it was. She had finished the scotch — that had been some time ago — but didn't feel compelled to get up and pour herself another drink.

Who had he been? Had he and her husband been . . . lovers? (Her mind gagged at the word, but she forced it out. Lovers. Loving one another. Her husband loving another man. Her husband touching another man, as he had touched her.)

"Goddamn you! You bastard! You son of a bitch!"

She spat out every word that she could think of, speaking them aloud in the darkened room.

The faces in the photographs had been smiling, clowning for the camera; they had been enjoying themselves.

She didn't think that she could bear it.

(Her husband's eyes, twinkling, as he leaned dog-fashioned over the boy doing the most appalling, obscene things . . . His body was so familiar, she remembered how it felt, straining against her as he entered her from behind — they had done it that way themselves, sometimes, and

she had never known, had never dreamed, how utterly perverse it had been.)

She clenched her eyes shut, but the images wouldn't go away.

The worst one was: her husband's mouth gaping open and the young man's semen smeared all over his face.

She waited in silence, knowing that she'd explode if he came home too soon. But she also knew that she could not, dared not, wait for him too long.

The telephone rang. She almost leapt from the chair, and then waited, stock still, for a second ring. The blood pulsed to her temples, and when it did ring again, it was almost a physical shock.

"Hello."

The voice on the other end was feminine.

"Oh, yes, how are you?"

She tried to focus on what was being said.

"At eight? Oh. Well, thank you for letting me know."

At eight. And what time was it now?

"Thank you. Goodbye."

He wouldn't be home till eight. He was working late. That had been his secretary calling.

She was still holding the receiver, silent now. Between gritted teeth:

"Goddamn you, Richard. Goddamn you, goddamn you, goddamn you!"

When she turned on the light, it was only six o'clock.

When had it begun? Had he always been this way?

Margaret had decided on a second drink, after all, but this time she had mixed it with water, and it was not so strong. Even so, she felt slightly intoxicated and she almost giggled (though it was more like a dry rasp in her throat) when she thought how Richard would react if he came home to find her drunk.

Had there been something about Richard that she'd always suspected?

It was not that they hadn't enjoyed their lovemaking, but rather that there had been something dutiful about it, except when they had "experimented." (She had always been honest with herself and been aware that she had certain hangups; but she had sincerely tried to overcome them for his sake, and, whenever anything went wrong, she had automatically assumed the blame.) But had it been her fault? Or had he been using her as the surrogate for . . . something else?

(Her mind still cringed from the idea of accepting the evidence of the photographs.)

Hadn't he always been, somehow, distant from her?

No, no, she was just imagining that . . .

Or was she?

The anger was dying away, and now, as always, she was torturing herself to find some explanation that she could pinpoint — something that she had done to drive him away. But to that? To another man?

God, what a fool I've been. Thinking that he loved me . . .

But he did. She knew that he did. And if that was the case . . . ?

Her mind refused to go any further.

She swirled the ice-cubes in her glass and sniffed the aroma of scotch. She decided to go upstairs and change into something nice, fix her makeup, maybe even do something with her hair, if she still had the time . . .

But for what? For what?

And why?

At quarter past seven, she was on her third drink, but she was taking this one easy. She had on a soft wool skirt and a clean blouse, and she had swept her hair back, leaving it to fall loosely down her neck. (I'm not bad looking, am I? No, I'm an attractive woman. It can't be that.)

She picked up the telephone and dialed her mother.

"Hello, dear. I didn't interrupt your dinner, did I?"

She explained that the kids had gone to the carnival down the street.

"Could you and Dad run down there and pick

them up and take them home with you?"

Her mother was immediately worried.

"No, no. There's nothing wrong. Richard and I just thought it might be a treat to have an evening to ourselves for a change. You don't mind, do you?"

She almost felt delighted with the ease with which she was lying to her mother.

"Oh, thank you, dear. I'll run by in the morning to pick them up and get them off to school."

And in the morning, things will be different, she was thinking. Or was that a confidence born of alcohol?

"Bless you, darling. You're an angel. Bye . . ."

Thank god. She would not have to worry about the children tonight. But what am I going to do next? What next?

The word came to her slowly and, if she hadn't been protected by a haze of scotch, she wouldn't have allowed it to enter her consciousness at all.

Richard was a homosexual.

"Homosexual."

She savored it out loud.

"My husband is a homosexual."

If it hadn't hurt so much, it would have been screamingly funny.

"My husband loves me, and he loves boys."

(The boy: why had he done this to Richard? The lewdness she might learn to accept, but the hatefulness that had prompted such an action . . .

The photographs lying scattered on the kitchen floor . . .)

"Faggott," she said. "Fairy, queer, pervert."

(No, she thought, she had already called him a pervert, earlier, earlier . . . When had that been?)

Had they been lovers and then had a quarrel? (How easy it was all coming out now.) Had the boy tried to blackmail him and failed, and this was his revenge? Or was he just sick?

(He had had such a mischievous look. Even in the pictures he had a certain playfulness about him . . . He was attractive.)

Was this his way of destroying their marriage so that he could take Richard away from her?

No! She wouldn't allow that . . .

But what if Richard wanted it that way? What if Richard had planned all this, what if it had been his idea?

She hated herself for even thinking of such a thing, and she knew that it wasn't possible. But even so . . .

Around and around and around. She felt sweaty again, and turned up the air conditioner. It was seven thirty. He would be home in half an hour. And she still didn't know what she would say, how she would confront him, or even if she should tell him what had happened at all . . .

Richard's smell. The warm, musky odor of his skin. Could she give that up?

She felt drowsy. She lay back on the sofa, staring at the clock out of the corner of her eye.

She had to think of the kids. Whatever happened, she didn't see how they could escape unscathed.

But what did she mean by that?

So many questions, and not enough time to think about them all . . .

She almost dozed off, woke up with a start and sat up, remembering that she had put on a good skirt and mustn't let it get mussed.

There was one of the photographs that she had not looked at too closely: she got up, unlocked the desk and quickly found it, shutting the others up again. They were not clowning in this one and they were not . . . doing anything. They were simply looking at one another.

They must have been sitting on the floor; she could only see their faces and the upper part of their torsos. And they were so . . . serene, so tender and . . . loving. Richard had his hand on the other man's shoulder and he was leaning toward him, but she couldn't mistake that look in his eye. She tried to remember if he had ever looked at her like that.

Maybe, at their wedding . . . Yes, certainly then, but how often since? She forced herself to smile, so that she wouldn't cry and ruin her mascara again.

So that was it. Whatever had happened between

them, Richard had loved that boy. And was that something that she could fight?

She didn't know. She tore the photograph into four pieces and set fire to it in the ashtray.

And then she looked at the clock again.

It was ten past eight when she heard his car in the driveway. She still didn't know what she was going to say, and there was a bruised feeling in the pit of her stomach.

They would have to work it out somehow. She would just have to remember that she loved

Richard and that he loved her, no matter what happened.

No matter what happened . . .

She sat there, still and quiet, waiting for the sound of his key in the lock.

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TOM FELT lives in Alexandria, Virginia and works for the Library of Congress, has appeared in *Vector*.

## Afterplays

by Wayne Jefferson

### THE POET'S FORMAL INTRODUCTION

I feel like I just  
crawled out from under some rock,  
stretching my arms. Hi!

### "PROTECT OUR YOUTHS' NEEDS . . ."

Age twelve: "Won't some man  
come take these boy-legs," wished I,  
(adult-molester)

### WHO, US? WELL, NO, NEVER

Would you stunt your kids'  
minds, spirits?/feed them lead paint?/  
boot them from their homes?

### SEX EDUCATION. (THE "BYWAYS")

". . . But you've never felt  
anything like that,—have you?"  
(that's no Question, Mom!)

#### REHEARSALS

I'd dated girls, girls.  
No-spark dry-run. Ignition  
and free-flow, absent.

#### DATING GIRLS

I played hard-to-get.  
I knew not why, then. Straightman:  
I leave you that ploy.

#### HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING CLASS

dared cling limp just one  
second beneath adored Jim—  
(that whetting, starved me—)

#### LATE START

Grow-up years: straights "learned  
the ropes," how to interlove—  
(where were we stowed then?)

#### SPEEDY CURE

"Why is wrong mit you,"  
gasped my distraught parents. (Odd;  
all'd come right at last!)

#### COMING-OUT NIGHT

I have extra hands.  
My new, core-seed self looms up  
awkward; smiles content.

#### ALL SUNDAY

Sweet quiet young Steve,  
so needful, I'd just boyhand  
& we'd come/come/come

#### AND WORN WITH PRIDE

I sport an infla-  
table "Gay Power" button—  
worn in gym showers

#### GLAD TO CLEAR UP THE POINT

"There are no ho-mo-  
sex-uals in this town, are there . . .?"  
"Nope!" I gaily said.

#### MIDDLETOWN U.S.A.

Gay folk of hometown  
(closer in cemeteries)—  
ghostly; here, not-here!

#### NEWS FROM UTOPIA PRESS

Mike Smith with Mark Brown  
attended the Junior Prom.  
Town's gay-lit group folds.

#### GAY PRIDE CONFERENCE

—"Family Re-union"—?  
(—but we never, however,  
grew up together!)

### LIKE FATHER, UNLIKE SON

"I've lived in our town  
all my life" / (i feel i've dwelled  
in this land—never)

### CLASS: GREASERS

Rednecks: fishhook grins,  
"fag," "dyke" spat out snarly. This  
harms me not—but bro/others, still.

### CLASS: "UPPA KRUST"

"Liberals": how to reach  
brainy wise nervous children  
basically care-less?

### DAMNED IF YOU DON'T . . .

closets cloy stifling,  
warm, but wool-wooden. So, Out?  
fresh gusts, acid-chills!

### LIBERATING A SUPPER CLUB

when we danced, they flipped:  
stare/giggle/shriek/guffaw/wave  
(they soon shrugged back calmed)

### SOCIAL CONTROL

"They can't put you in  
jail for what you think"—tho they  
help you jail yourself—

### UNNECESSARY CASUALTY

rotted his oppressed  
brain soft on junk; came "head-cleared,"  
yet can't get *quite* cleared—

### A "FAIRY PRINCESS"

Stamped in kulchur's press,  
just like Sambo/Uncle Tom;  
chicks; "Tonto"; Joe Cool—

### DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Deep-closet brother,  
grim, tense—you fear up-front me  
more than you dread them!

### NO, HE'S NOT OPPRESSED

"Don't flaunt, rock the boat.  
Straights aren't ready. Fems harm us.  
Why blurt of sex lives?"

### OUR LOST GENERATION

Sad patient resigned  
prim drab wan ones of fifty—  
I'd kill to help them—

### EXTENDED FAMILY

At my deathbed, please,  
all my tricks come gather round . . .  
There's Solemn Mass then!

#### TO MEET EVERYONE . . .

i know "there's never  
enough time"; there *never* is,  
(not even for hets—)

#### SHORT/HALF-LIFE

Why late-bloom our teens,  
duck thru Twenties dark-ghettoed,  
pull shades at thirty?

#### HIS (HALF-) HOUR

Sweet nineteen dances  
strobes faster for wall-shadows  
momentum him now

#### BEFORE LIBERATION . . .

. . . "Gay" sex, often just  
that sad-grim-grateful-cautious  
bow to oases—

#### COMING CLOSE

Ultimate pervert:  
he who's openly tender  
during a quickie!

#### BEYOND MERE BASKETRY

"Sure'd like to see what  
he's got!" (Look more carefully;  
he shows it you now)

#### SCREW-FLICKS

Beyond the "Ah!"'s, "Wow!"'s,  
wry chuckles, you can sense it—  
eyes questing beyond—

#### HOT-SHIT GAY-LIBERATIONIST

If I'm so freed, why  
madly shuffle-cover these  
notes when straights drop in?

#### HALFWAY THERE

Rapped high hours on  
gay/male-lib, with brothers--then  
left without hugging—

#### THE PEOPLE ONE MEETS

"More liberated  
than you are. That's me. O-less  
competitive, too."

#### YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, MAC

lets see i guess i'd  
better mention lesbians  
some where in my verse . . .

#### CLUB(BY) BATHS

Men bond competent;  
they do selves-things together:  
these auto-brothels

#### FORCES

Elegantly slim,  
his knife-blade lankiness swells  
my huge fat stomach.

#### ANOTHER ARGUMENT

"Crime Against Nature!"  
(How? Nature's goal's that all blooms  
proper to its own—)

#### SODOMY

"Passive"? "Degrading"?  
(fulfilled refuelling-linkage;  
world pivots, rides me!)

#### RELIGION

Love Your Neighbor with  
a two-thousand-year-old scrap  
of rotten parchment

#### WELL WE FLEW IN

Those *questions* straights ask  
at gay-lib speaking panels —  
Who are we? Martians?

#### ARMY REGULATIONS 635-89

No, spin that around:  
"Military service is  
unfit for gay folk . . ."

#### A HOMOPHOBE

"Rightness"/disgust in  
that prim-pursed mouth; fears lance hate  
out those jet eyes. (Pfehh!)

#### "PROGRESS" IN "THERAPIES"

Bloodletting, skulls punched  
("We'll cure it if it kills you")  
—now, the shocking couch.

#### "WE ADVOCATE, RECRUIT?"

Would I "convert" you?  
Sure, to a policy of  
not converting us!

#### "NEITHER MARX NOR JESUS"

Look, young gay Marxists—  
frozen russia/dank cuba/  
brainwashedclean china!

#### MYTH #37 OR SO

Sleazy parks, back-bars,  
how we love our dingy haunts,  
more than your sunlight!

#### WE'RE EVERYWHERE

"Three men, three women"  
on that T.V. forum. Look  
how it's unbalanced . . !

#### COMPUTERIZATION

My congressperson  
writes: "Dear Mr. and Mrs. . . ."  
(... presumptuousness!)

#### AT A GAY PRIDE PARADE

"Men, Son, see & do  
their Duty cool, stand the flak."  
(?who's that out there, then?)

#### BEYOND THE "DOUBLE LIFE"

Church, state, school drilled me:  
"Lying, hypocrisy's bad"—  
(—learned too well for ya?)

#### A REALLY HIP YOUNG TEACHER!

"Must tell of white, male  
dominance!" hence, overhauls  
her course (quite straightly)

#### TEXTBOOK BIAS / OUR "HERITAGE"

Stonewall; Zuidhorn; "camp";  
pink triangles; calamus—  
teachers, know you *these*?

#### ACADEMIC "FREEDOM"

"Interesting"; to write  
articles on Oppression  
I can't sign as mine—

#### SECOND YEAR OF TEACHING

Now, the guys all sit  
in that front row of the room—  
something's getting learned!

#### A FRESHMAN

Face curly with glee,  
zesty in clean-limbed denim—  
a learning-resource!

#### "DOING A TERM PAPER . . . "

Each week his questions  
flow less dry/reserved/abstract.  
(he's learning himself!)

#### THE REAL MESSAGE

All day, mimeoed  
gay-lib stuff; then ink-stained, glimpsed  
sun-print on young cheek!

#### STRAIGHT BOY

your calm selfhood (tho  
might carry you to crush us)—  
this entralls me, too—

#### #1: BEARER OF BAD TIDINGS

"I want to be straight . . ."  
"Wull, you flowed gay *here*," I touched—  
(so he hated me)

### #2: THE ROMANTIC LOVE TRIP

Oh he charmed. "Come live  
cottage-coupled al-ways" (or  
i'll tweak your nuts off)

### BROWN ROOTS

Friend, you're my forest.  
Solid; pliant; responsive;  
I dwell in y/our glade.

### #3: NOW

How easy it is,  
loving you. why wasn't this  
invented before?

### "CENTERING & FOCUSING"

Doris and John: my  
warm windows on this cold world—  
glass, a touch fragile—

### EVENING SOFA: EARLY

I'm in my own skin  
now, manning your torso close;  
home at last, tonight.

### TOUCHING YOU

Thirsty hands con-firm  
soft-solid chest: warm tan silk;  
vibrant chalice kissed —

### FIFTY MILES NEAR

Your total body-  
print dwells under-my-skin still:  
scent, heft, essence—you.

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WAYNE JEFFERSON lives in Milwaukee, does  
graphics and counseling, writes for GPU News.

by Daniel Curzon

# Love, Love, Love

More than anything in the whole world, Arthur wanted a one-night stand. But he couldn't get one. He couldn't get one because B. J., his lover of many years, stood in his way. Not only did B. J. stand in Arthur's way (and he was one hundred eighty pounds of the most masculine muscle this side of the Marlboro man), but he was forever trailing him when Arthur went out for a loaf of nine-grains bread or a quart of low-fat milk. Arthur couldn't even put away the groceries or watch TV without B. J. sidling up to him and caressing his thighs or his chest or massaging his back. Arthur would stand in their newly tiled kitchen (they'd done it themselves in glossy white Dutch tiles specially imported) and wondered what he could possibly do to escape. He thought if he got hugged or had a loving word whispered in his ear one more time he'd scream? Absolutely scream, and yet screaming wasn't Arthur's way at all. He wasn't quite as tall or as muscular as B. J., but he was every bit as masculine. (They both kept in shape by running together, five miles every other day, and taking long hikes on weekends.) He really didn't know how much longer he could put up with all of B. J.'s endearments and generosities, and secretly he started to plan a one-night stand.

"I'm going out," Arthur said, and B. J. looked up, hurt. "I won't be long."

"Can I come with you?" B. J. asked, dropping his hammer. (He'd been putting an extra room in the basement of their house.)

"I won't be long."

"Where're you going, honey?"

Arthur hesitated, trying to seem nonchalant. "Oh, nowhere. Just out."

"Don't you want me to come along? You look very handsome today."

"Thank you." Arthur nervously stroked his beard, which was quite thick and black. B. J. was forever telling him how nice he looked. In particular B. J. loved the contrast between Arthur's black beard and his blond head hair. B. J. said it made him look exotic and sexy, like a Renaissance duke.

"Can't I give you a lift somewhere?" B. J. asked.

"Wouldn't want to put you to the trouble."

"No trouble, honey," B. J. smiled. He was clean-shaven, punctual, and had brown eyes the size of Lincoln pennies. He came over to Arthur, to give him a hug.

"Don't you have to finish the extra room in the basement?"

"It can wait. You come first."

"I suppose you think I ought to be helping you with it. So you'll be finished faster?" Arthur looked up argumentatively.

B. J. shook his head. "It's all right. I can finish it myself."

"I haven't helped you with anything around here since we put in the Dutch tile."

"It's okay," B. J. smiled, caressing Arthur. He blew a small puff of love into Arthur's ear.

He had very nice breath.

"I didn't go on that picnic you wanted us to go on either, remember?"

B. J. hugged Arthur from behind and tickled his ear with his tongue. "I don't mind. I don't want to force you into things, you know that."

"You're so nice to me," Arthur had to admit.

"Because I love you, honey." B. J. nibbled on Arthur's earlobe.

"And you came to visit me in the hospital when I had my appendectomy."

"I loved every minute. Holding your hand until you came to."

"I remember . . . your face was the last thing I saw before the doctor operated and the first thing I saw when I woke up."

"I'm glad you pulled through so fast."

Arthur yanked up his knit shirt and touched the appendectomy scar. "You don't even seem to mind that my body's scarred now." He tapped the line of the incision.

B. J. leaned around and kissed the scar. "I love every scar on your body because it's yours."

"Don't I ever make you a little bit mad?"

"Why should you?"

Arthur stifled a sigh. "I always have you to lean on, don't I?"

"Always, Arthur." B. J. hugged him and then ran his tongue over Arthur's belly button.

"We've never had a quarrel, have we?"

"Not even a spat," B. J. said, grinning. He was remarkably good-looking, Arthur couldn't help noting. Whatever it was that caused handsomeness, B. J.'s square face had all the right proportions, a nose without any hairs sticking out, teeth that seemed never to get food particles between them. B. J. didn't even have morning mouth.

"Do you ever cheat on me?" Arthur asked suddenly.

"How do you mean?"

"Cheat—you know, sneak out with other guys?"

"Why would I want to, honey? I'm totally involved and satisfied and happy with you."

Arthur could tell that B. J. meant it. "How about with girls? Do you ever sneak out and get

it on with girls maybe?"

"Not since I left my wife for you, you know that."

"How many years have we been together now—no, never mind, don't answer that. I don't want to hear the figure."

"Is something bothering you, Arthur?"

"No."

"You sure?"

"No, everything's fine. How's the basement coming along?"

"Super! I should have it finished by next week. Then we can throw that party we've been planning."

"I'm going out now," Arthur said.

He got in his car and drove to the other side of town, parked, and went into a dirty bookstore, where he'd heard there was a back room where guys got it on, day and night.

He bought a membership card and went inside, where it was as dark as an alleyway. Various hunky men were lined up along the walls, cruising each other with hot, lascivious eyes. Arthur got an erection immediately.

He went up next to one, to get a better look at his face.

"Hi, Arthur!" a voice said. It was B. J.

"What are you doing here?"

"I followed you. I noticed that you seemed rather unhappy or dissatisfied today, and I wanted to help."

"Nice place, isn't it?" Arthur said, gesturing at two men who were taking turns sucking each other.

"Do you want me to hold your hand until you feel better?" B. J. asked.

"Not particularly. Okay?"

"How about a hug?"

"No, thanks. Not at the moment."

"How about sex? Do you want to go home and have sex in our bed?"

"Not right now, I guess."

"We could do it in the garage, for variety."

"That's all right, B. J."

"How about in the bathtub?"

Arthur left, and drove to another part of town.

He found an out-of-the-way gay bar down on the waterfront and went inside. The bar was full of seedy types in various stages of leather and undress. An unshaven man with a huge bulge in his crotch started to stare at Arthur, who went over closer.

"Do you want to kneel down in front of me here or somewhere else?" the man with the huge bulge asked.

Arthur grew immensely aroused at the suggestion.

"Of course I won't talk to you anymore, as soon as I come," the bulge said.

"I understand," Arthur said, starting to go down on his knees.

B. J. came in the front door and walked over before Arthur could unzip the bulge's fly. "Don't you love me anymore?" he said.

"Sure I do."

"Of course I understand if you don't."

"But, B. J., I do love you! There's no question of that!"

"Do you want me to put on leather like this man you're kneeling in front of? Huh?"

"Not particularly."

"Are you sure, Arthur?"

"I'm pretty sure."

"I will if you want me to."

"Would you mind going away right now, B. J.?"

B. J. looked hurt. "Of course not." He took two steps, then turned back. "Can I give you a hug before I go?"

Arthur got up off his knees and ran from the bar.

He drove to another city and went to a steam-bath that had been condemned by the fire department and the Legion of Decency. Various men in riding chaps and black hoods were fornicating in the hallways. Arthur stepped into a bunkroom that smelled of amyl nitrite and sex sweat. Arthur felt a great impulse to unzip his fly.

A dude with an insolent head of negroid hair and a dildo as long as a policeman's night stick was hanging by one fist from a bunkbed. He waved the dildo at Arthur. "You want me to shove this

in you?" he asked.

Arthur started to remove his clothes.

B. J.'s head popped up from the top tier of the bunkbed, above the dude hanging by one hand. "Do you really want to do this, Arthur?" he asked.

"I think so," Arthur replied.

"Why?"

"I can't say exactly. I just do."

"Are you trying to hurt me?"

"I don't think so. That's why I drove to another city."

"I know, it's a hundred and sixty-two miles back to our house."

"If I let this guy shove that dildo inside me, will it be all over between us?"

"Of course not. I understand."

"You do?"

"I'm not giving you what you want at home, am I?"

"We had sex seven times last week. In fact, we've had sex seven times a week ever since we've been together. How many years is that now?"

"Is there something you want that I'm not doing? Do you want me to throw mustard on your buttocks, or something like that?"

"Not particularly."

"How about if I bought you a big dildo for your birthday?"

"B. J., would you go away, please. Please go away."

"I love you, Arthur. Always remember that. No matter what, I'll always love you."

"I love you too. I do, B. J. I really do love you!"

B. J. walked out of the bunkroom. Arthur hesitated for a minute and then let the big dude shove the dildo all the way into him.

Arthur was overjoyed at the result. As soon as he came, he went to another steambath in another city and had sex with a hairy midget visiting from Albuquerque. It was totally pointless and quite wonderful. He stayed away from home for four years and three months, and didn't trick with the same person twice in all that time. He lost count of all his one-night stands. He'd

never been happier in his entire life.

Then one night, while in the midst of an orgy with two pilots from an Air Force base in Nova Scotia, Arthur thought about B. J. He jumped out of bed and, quite nude, called him right then and there.

"B. J., this is Arthur."

"How are you?"

"Okay. Yourself?"

"I think about you a lot. Do you ever think about me, Arthur?"

"Sometimes, sure."

"I tried to love you, Arthur."

"I know."

"Are you ready to come home now?"

"No," Arthur said, and hung up.

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DANIEL CURZON is the author of *The Misadventures of Tim McPick*, a comic novel, available for \$3.50 from The John Parke Custis Press, c/o English Dept./CSUF/Fresno, Ca 93740.

## Well, No. 3

by Aaron Cohen

It has always seemed  
I'm the only one  
who doesn't know how  
to have fun  
in a gay bar.



1.

He was. He was a writer. Could speak in tongues, with the voices of angels, of demons, of ancient gods. A writer. He had visions, startling dreams, amazing insights (always private because dangerous, dangerous because suspect in the provincial backwater in which he lived). Sometimes he soared, swam through the clear blue prairie air, seeing himself as the falcon, archetypal hunter hunted by men. No one knew. He never let on. "If they knew, they'd destroy me," he thought. He was seventeen, awkward, ungainly, shy. He went on masturbating. A writer. He saw them all around him in the town where he lived—wizened old women fingering carrots in the Safeway, rednecks glaring at passing cars from the APCO station, obese mothers slapping their kids silly at the Dairy Queen. It didn't touch him. He was looking inward, utilizing his inner eye, drawing on his spiritual powers, in touch with his inner nature. He was horny all the time. Had no friends. Slouched when he walked. Loved the hole in the sole of his sneaker. Enjoyed his own smells—sweat, shit, piss, anything. Read *Leaves of Grass* in the toilet. Longed to kiss the hair on his chest (which was blonde). Alpha and Omega, Yang and Yin, body and soul—Jerry Kinzer, writer. Sometimes he dreamed that the town, the state, the entire Midwest had been consumed by flames. Always, when he woke up, he was ashamed of himself, but his dreams continued during the daylight hours. Read books on successful revolutions—American, French, Russian, Chinese—and waited, smiling to himself, knowing he'd never live to see it, but hoping anyway. Wore an old army jacket, like Castro. No one knew what it meant. Time passed. Grew older.

He worked at dead-end jobs, supporting himself and his father, who was sixty-seven years old and growing senile. He was the youngest of seven children, all of whom had married and moved away. His mother was dead. Mixed cement for a construction gang, which gave him a terrific lower back pain. Made cat food at the Car-

nation plant, wearing a white mask which did nothing to keep out the stench. Twisted wires at Wire Rope Corporation. Operated a press at the foundry. Got drunk on words. Wrote them down in the middle of the night. Whispered them into the press machine. "Before God, I am exceeding weary!" "Virtue! a fig! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus." "You sunburnt sicklemen, of August weary, come hither from the furrow and be merry." The machine responded by attempting to devour him. "This kid, he ain't dealin' from a full deck," the foreman said before he fired him.

"Better to be on welfare than put up with this shit," he shouted. "Who needs this anyhow?" (Looking up "unemployment office" under "u" in the yellow pages.) But he was free! He saw himself in the window of the local drugstore, saw himself smiling, loved his own image, did a quick little dance right there on Main Street. People saw, pursed their lips, clucked their tongues, shook their heads. Ain't dealin' from a full deck! He despised them, saw through them, knew they were mired in their own spiritual decay.

Enrolled at the local junior college. Wrote his own final exam question in freshman comp. Q. WHAT ARE THE PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE HUMAN SOUL? 45 points. A. The human soul is shaped like a trapezoid, as Heraclitus perceived 2500 years ago. But others have seen it different. Seneca said it was more like a rhomboid. Anyway, one thing is for sure, it is cream-colored in the center, shading off into greyish-green at the edges. In texture it's got the consistency of cottage cheese. Or is it putty? Or wait, it is more like toothpaste; yes, that's it. Or like cream in the separator when it toughens up on a cold morning. I tossed a stone in a watering trough once and saw a soul down there in the very center of those circles as they formed. This soul spoke to me saying, "Get out of town before it's too late." I love my soul. Do you love your soul? Sincerely yours, Jerry M. Kinzer, freshman."

His instructor said, "You are a real writer," and gave him an A for the semester, which dis-

appointed him. He had expected to fail. He dropped out second semester and shoveled snow for small change until spring. Had no real need for education. Could educate himself. In April he went on the road. Headed west, dreaming of San Francisco.

Picked up for vagrancy in Cozad, Nebraska, with thirteen cents and Dostoyevski's *The Brothers Karamazov* in his possession. Returned home—to rain, fog, cold, floods, and a father getting more crotchety every day.

"Why don't you git a job, y' worthless bum!"  
"Why don't you flush yourself down the stool?"

"You gonna sit around this kitchen all your life, readin' them books?"

"Are you gonna flap your senile old gums at me all your life?"

"Why'n cha git y'self a gal?"

"Why don't you throw yourself in front of a Union Pacific freight?"

A disastrously wet spring was followed by a summer without rain—sixty-seven days without significant moisture. The boards of his father's house were as brittle as matchwood. He had fantasies about burning the old place down. For sixty-seven days no words came. He sat on the porch, drinking Vino Mio, as hollow inside his head as Mammoth Cave. Corn, milo, wheat, sorghum—all withered in the fields, turned hollow, turned brown.

"I seen it worse'n this during' that durned ole Depression, you betcha!"

"Oh shut up, you old fool!" He found his father's old Smith and Wesson in a bureau drawer and determined to use it, on himself. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind. He felt the cool slim barrel, liked the phallic shape, placed it in his mouth, thought, "By God, I'll do it—soon!" But the moment had to be absolutely right. He would know that moment when it came. The woods are lovely dark and deep. And I'm going to blow my brains out in them. Yes. Don't try to stop me, old man. I've made up my mind. He kissed the pistol—waiting.

"I seen you foolin' around with that there pistol. What you plannin' to do, shoot me in m'

sleep?"

"You old bastard, I told you to stop spying on me."

"I'm gonna have you put away, boy!"

"They'll put you away at the same time, you senile old moose!" Why waste a bullet on him?

The moment came. He rose from a dream of flaming apocalypse, walked out into the fields, sat down in the weeds on the flint-hard ground, took the pistol in his mouth, made his mind go blank, pulled the trigger and, as the heat-lightning flashed in the sky—

died.

## 2.

But no, I can't do that to him. Haven't the heart. Have come to love him in the last few weeks, love him for his craziness, his orneriness, for his rotting teeth, his funky armpits, for the sweat on his balls. No, I can't kill him off. Made his mind go blank and then—couldn't do it. He lowered the pistol and cried, knowing he couldn't do it. His tongue darted out and caught up the tears at the corners of his mouth. He loved all his bodily secretions, especially tears (because of the salt—salt distilled from emotion). Pure Whitman. He stripped off his clothes and threw himself on the ground. "I want to live!" he said, catching the smell of manure from the shed. "I want to make the whole world. Everyone in it. Men, women, cats, dogs—I don't care. I am the life force and my moment has come!"

He walked back to the house buck naked, knowing he had been spiritually reborn, with the granddaddy of all erections pulling him forward toward the all-encompassing, all-devouring earth (Thomas Wolfe), put on fresh jeans and one of his brother's old Army shirts, and was on the road before sunrise, heading west, this time across Kansas (fuck Nebraska!), determined to get to San Francisco this time or—or bust. Oh, and he left a note for his father. "Old man. You done give birth to a genius. Yr. son Jerry. Good-bye. I will be back when I get famous."

Beaten up in a brawl in a Mexican bar in Goodland, Kansas. "That there stool is *mine*, boy," said a drunk at the bar. "Oh. Oh, sorry, sir. I will sit over on this one then." "That one is mine, too," the man said. And he had time to see the man's fist before it flattened his nose. Woke up in the county hospital, being interviewed by the police. He gave a false name, false address, refused to press charges—exhilarated by the adventure of it all, though his nose would never be the same, of course. ("Wasn't much of a nose anyhow.") The nurse was over one hundred years old and had a face like the hind end of a steer, but she could still say, without a smile, "You are suffering from a terminal disease, child. It's called 'The Uglies!'"

"Don't give me no sass," he answered. "Just bring me a pencil and some paper and leave me be."

Writer.

At Limon, Colorado, he saw mountains for the first time in his life, and mistook them for clouds against the horizon. When he realized that they were in fact mountains—the eastern slope of the Rockies!—he shouted, "Hot dog!" Tried to find words to describe them—blue-grey diaphanous—but none were adequate. Finally decided they were pure erectile tissue—God's hard-on—and, satisfied with that, shuffled along in the yellow dust, under the hard bright metallic sun, his thumb out, begging for rides. But in no real hurry. No. Seeing himself now, after four days on the road, in a kind of double-vision—the old Jerry Kinzer and the new. Stripping off his old skin, like the snake under the water in the first part of *Walden*. The Colorado sun felt so good (God's loving kiss) on his sunburned neck. Picked up by the archetypal faggot in his Jag, who drove him to Denver, but did not make a pass at him, which (he had to admit to himself) disappointed him. Of course he was ugly as sin, with his broken nose and three stitches still in place on his upper lip—but still! "I am still technically a virgin," he would have told the faggot (if the faggot had bothered to ask). "I have been had by neither women nor men—as yet." But the faggot let him off in downtown

Denver, saying only, "Your trip hasn't even begun yet!" Rich bastard. Capitalist. Repressed. God, how Jerry loved him (as he loved all human beings) at that moment. Then Denver closed in on him with a crash and he knew he was lost and would never get to San Francisco.

He would die here in Denver, of dysentery—because that's what he had contracted (in that hospital in Goodland!). He would never find his way through these endless streets (banked with mountains, which forced him eastward—always eastward, as though some terrible magnet had been set up in the center of the Midwest to draw him home!) There was nothing benevolent about those mountains. They were not diaphanous (God forgive me!). They were a real cosmic energy force, driving him backwards, telling him, in the language of the old Indian Gods, "This far—and no further." Meanwhile, he was shitting himself to death. And you cannot live on Colorado air alone. And after two days in Denver, he knew he was starving.

In the Bethel Mission, an old man who looked remarkably like his father, leaned out of his cot and whispered, "Stop fighting it. Accept it. Feel the bumps on your skull. You were not destined to conquer these mountains. And besides—you are ugly as sin."

"Fuck you," Jerry answered. "It's easy to conquer these mountains, and as soon as my bowels get in touch with my spirit, I'll walk over them—on my hands!"

"Don't drink the potato soup here," the old man said. "They put chemicals in it. One sip and you'll stay in Denver forever." A minister arrived, carrying a Bible. Jerry opened it at random and read, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of the dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." He closed his eyes, overwhelmed by the vision—the universe spreading out around him in billowing waves of whiteness, a cosmic bedsheet flapping in the sunlight on the line. He heard the old man sawing wood in his sleep; but he heard music also. And then the

words came. Writer.

3.

Dear reader, tell me, what am I supposed to do with Jerry M. Kinzer now—whom I visualize at this moment sitting in the dust by the side of the road a few miles from Arvada, Colorado, scribbling in a spiral-ring notebook, his hair in his eyes, his face broken out, his toes coming through his sneakers and his ass through the seat of his pants, drawing in the thin mountain air with difficulty through his deviated septum? You may as well know, he has picked up a buddy by now, a hyperactive little runaway who calls himself “Boston.” (Boston is scouring the ditch a hundred yards away, looking for Coke bottles. He is wearing a porkpie hat with a safety pin in the brim.) They slept together under the same blanket last night, and mutual loneliness, mutual horniness and, yes, mutual affection led to mutual masturbation, which makes Jerry no longer a technical virgin, if not yet quite a queer. (I’m not sure about this—and neither is he.) Anyway, the evidence is there on the blanket, lying there like a thin, shiny sugar glaze on a doughnut, and I thought I’d better point it out to you, for what it’s worth. (Very little, I expect.) The words he’s writing will not (because they could not) convince you that he is indeed a writer. You will have to take my word for it. They are, “Stench stink Issue Love peace manumission Forgiveness charity Onion soup.” Aren’t you sorry you asked?

Now Jerry and I are doing the “mirror bit,” the oldest routine in vaudeville. As I lick my lips (which have red wine on them), Jerry licks his. His are dry and chapped, from exposure to the wind. As I scratch my ass, he scratches his. We watch each other, waiting for a mistake, a break in the routine. As I move my pencil across the page (across the page), he moves his (manumission). But I am not Jerry and Jerry is not me. And this game has begun to bore us both. Here comes Boston. Thank heaven for that.

“I’m goin’ on by myself, Jer’. It’s too hard, two people tryin’ to pick up a ride together. Nobody’ll do it. We’d best split up.”

I perceive some residual sexual guilt here (but then, after all, I’m an Irish Catholic.) Jerry sees it otherwise. “Well, fuck y’ then. You don’t wanna stay by me, I hope a rapist gets ahold of you. Go to hell. I hope I never see you again. Take your old Coke bottles and shove ‘em where the moon don’t shine!”

So much for that. They walk on together, through mountain sunlight clashing like cymbals around them. And I guessed wrong—for I figured they’d split up at that point. But no.

For characters like Jerry will always surprise you. You give them sweat glands, gonads, an anus, a beating heart, acne, teeth (decayed but still functional), eyes with which to see, ears with which to hear, even a nose to be broken—and then they go ahead and do what they damned-well please. What does he do now? He steps into the weeds and urinates, enjoying it immensely, forgetting to thank me for giving him a bladder. A bird chirps in the distance. The sound reverberates against his auditory nerve. I preside over that nerve. It has my blessing, because I have just bestowed it upon him. It responds, as well, to his friend’s voice. “Hey Jer, ‘s a car comin’ An’ I think it’s gonna stop Hurr’ up, why’n cha?”

The car stops—my foot being pressed against the brake pedal. Jerry and Boston move on. San Francisco is only 750 miles further west (give or take a hundred miles). The dust coated (coats?) my tongue. The sun beats down on my forehead. I figure that bird is a Lucy’s Warbler—but I been wrong before.

4.

No, let me speak for myself, John. This throat’s my own and this tongue belongs to me. I’m pulling air into my own lungs and I don’t need you anymore. You aren’t even half aware of your own mistakes—and you think you’re so

damned good! Why I'd never say "blue-grey diaphanous," not in a million years! I wouldn't even think it. And I've never spoke "in tongues." I'm no Jesus Freak. And your "falcon"—why that's just some silly affectation, and I don't know where you came up with it. I've murdered my father a million times in my own mind—not only murdered him but dismembered his body, put his meat in the stew pot and served his flesh up to strangers. And took a kind of ticklish delight in watching the gustatory neighbors chomp down on his flesh—his thighs, his biceps, his puny little phallus. You made him kind of cuddly-cute and cozy, a Walter Brennan type out of some old John Ford movie. You exploited my father for laughs! (Nevertheless, since I am you and you are me, I'm bringing him on for a reprieve. "Why you young whippersnapper! You little scallywag! You scamp! You aint never gonna 'mount t' nothin'. Why'n ch' gitta job?" Had enough?)

And you couldn't make me a real writer because you said no one ever created a successful writer in fiction! Why you never even showed any of my stuff. Why? Because you're jealous, that's why. My stuff has more power, more guts, more raw strength than anything you ever wrote. And I'm gay, have always been gay, was gay before I even knew what the word meant.

How come you pussy-footed around it? You make me a chronic masturbator, but that wasn't it at all. You think you're going to escape me now. Well, think again, John. In the burrows of the nightmare, where justice naked is (Auden), I will be waiting for you. Yours truly—Jerry M. Kinzer, writer.

---

JOHN GILGUN lives in St. Joseph, Missouri; he has published in *Wormwood Review*.

## The Folsom Street Barracks

The black woodwork  
The black doors  
The red walls  
The amber lights.  
Some Rimbaud must've been  
very excate.  
This hole dug into the cellar of Folsom street  
Yes, there is something inescapably liturgical  
here, the air - crisco, stale amyle, semen, and sweat  
thick man-sex sweat.  
The sweating thighs for the benefit of the amber lights  
(palace of the damned?)  
(a vision of hell?)  
(the erotic of intense beauty gliding through the grotesque?)  
How close it all comes  
to the living loins of all men,

by William Sufleski

like sunsets over seas that touch hearts  
great hands of blood fire holding  
heavy, indulgent cocks and balls  
The heat  
oppressive heat  
steam  
Dramatic vignettes in corridor after corridor  
of doorways:

The inviting ass  
The half dressed FeBe motorcyclist  
The jock (in jock strap)  
The well-oiled body (again amber, to glisten)  
The whip  
The leather chaps (revealing pendulous organs)  
The pornography breathed by some laughing god  
to life (insincerity is impossible here.)  
The sucking off in the hallways, fucking off  
in the bunk beds.  
The mythical multi-armed, multi-fleshed beast  
in the mythical oversized bed.  
The marvelous theatre room of toilet stalls  
with carefully executed glory holes (and no toilets)  
The human toilets, rugs, staircases of drugged flesh  
The popular music that never stops, ever.  
Baccanalia, Celtic stag orgy, the Damned, the Horny  
All, all  
The farthest of extremes is possible, demanded for entrance.  
Truly delight, the pleasure of the Most Obscene.  
I have not, however, ever  
had the courage to face one thing—  
the grey of morning coming in with a vengeance  
(as it must) at the Barracks;  
The angel at the gate, charybdis.  
You must always escape, in a taxi or on foot.  
To let the dawn coming up find you there  
means your life is over  
The Folsom Street Barracks must never become common  
or repeated anywhere else, anywhere.

---

WILLIAM SUFLESKI lives part of the year in  
San Diego, part of it in Connecticut, is only  
twenty-three, and very talented.

# Cry Wolf

by Douglas Roome

Copyright 1975

## Characters (And Notes On Same):

RED  
WHITE  
BLUE  
BOY

The ages of WHITE and BLUE may be anywhere from early-thirties to fifties. RED may be as young as twenty-five. Physical type, race, etc. are arbitrary. They are simply three quite ordinary macho heterosexuals.

BOY may be as old as fourteen, or as young as nine.

Time and Place: When and where performance takes place.

## Set (Written for thrust stage):

Table and three chairs at center. On table, playing cards.

At Rise: RED, WHITE and BLUE are at table playing cards in mime. Pause. BOY rushes in from right.

BOY (Excitedly): Wolf! Wolf! (Men turn and glance at him, then at each other)

RED: Wolf?

WHITE: What'd he say?

BLUE: Said he saw a wolf. Probably just a large dog.

BOY (Impatiently): It was a wolf! That big!  
(Indicates an animal the height of a Great Dane) And it chased me!

RED: No one around here has a dog that size.

WHITE: Could be a stray.

BOY: I hid in a tree till it went away. (Significantly) It acted crazy! It walked funny and it foamed at the mouth!

BLUE (Jumps up): Rabies! (RED and WHITE get up)

RED: I've got a thirty-aught-six and a sixteen gauge in my pickup truck!

BLUE: Then let's get the job done before that dog bites somebody! (Men start toward right)

BOY: It's a wolf!

BLUE (Over his shoulder): Go tell the sheriff, boy! (Men exit right)

BOY giggles, claps his hands, capers briefly and then exits left. Lights go down and then come up again. Men file in from right, sit at table and begin to play cards in mime. Pause. BOY rushes in from right.

BOY (Excitedly): Bucky Blue's hurting Sissy White! (BLUE and WHITE look at each other)

RED (Quickly): Is Bucky foaming at the mouth! (Smiles. BLUE and WHITE sit back and chuckle)

WHITE: Kid's got more imagination than brains!

BLUE: Soft in the head from playing with himself.

BOY (Pouts): Okay for you! (Edging toward left.

Significantly) But I saw them skinny-dipping in the quarry! And I saw them wrestling and fooling around naked!

WHITE (Worriedly): I saw them take the trail up to the quarry . . .

BOY (Wildly, with gestures): Then Sissy got mad at something Bucky did and swore at him! Then Bucky got mad and grabbed his hunting knife and made Sissy go in the bushes with him! Except Sissy didn't want to and she was crying! (WHITE is on his feet by now, flaring at BLUE)

WHITE (Hysterically): If he's . . . ! If he's touched my little girl . . . !

BLUE (Jumps up. Violently): She asked for it — she begged for it! Showing herself naked to a healthy boy like Bucky! Wrestling with him and leading him on! He'd have to be queer not to want her, and only half a man not to take her!

RED: What the hell good is yelling at each other going to do! (Gets up)

WHITE (Bolts toward right): I'll cut the little bastard's balls off if he has! (Exits)

BLUE (Rushes after WHITE): I'll see you dead and in hell first! (Exits)

RED (Following after WHITE and BLUE): Damn fools! Let's find out if anything happened first! (Turns at edge of stage and looks back at BOY, who does his best to look innocent) This time I hope you're lying! (Exits)

BOY giggles, claps his hands, capers briefly and then exits left. Lights go down and then come up again. Men file in from right, sit at table and begin to play cards in mime. Pause. BOY rushes in from right.

BOY (Excitedly): There's a man in a parachute just hanging in the big pine tree! (Men don't react) He looks dead! (Men don't react. BOY moves closer to them) Know what else? He's got a suitcase tied to himself! (Men don't react. BOY moves even closer) You think maybe it's the skyjacker!? (Men don't react. BOY moves even closer) The one that got away with a million dollars!? (Men jump up and grab for BOY. BLUE catches him)

BLUE (Shaking BOY): Filthy little trouble-making liar!

BOY (Struggling frantically): I'll tell my father!

RED (Taking his belt off): We told him what we'd do the next time you told a lie.

BLUE (Dragging BOY toward right, followed by others): Now you're going to get what you deserve!

BOY (Whiningly): It was only a joke!

WHITE: Of course it was. And now we're going to share a joke with you -- just to show you what good sports we are! (They exit)

Lights go down and then come up again. Men file in from right, sit at table and begin to play cards in mime. Pause. BOY enters quickly from right, an anxious expression on his face. He crosses to left of table, stops and stares fixedly at something off right.

BLUE: One wolf out of you and we'll give you rosy cheeks again. (RED and WHITE chuckle)

RED: He's got a pretty good howl -- maybe he's part wolf himself! (WHITE and BLUE chuckle)

WHITE (Glances at BOY, then follows his gaze): Who's that? (Blue and RED look off right)

RED: New owner of the toy and hobby shop.

BOY starts to exit left, hesitates, and then returns and crouches behind table.

WHITE (Nods toward BOY): What's the matter with him?

BLUE: Thinks he sees furry red Martians.

WHITE: He looks honestly scared.

RED: Probably just trying to see if he can lie with his mouth closed.

WHITE: What's this new guy like?

RED (Shrugs): Quiet. Keeps to himself and minds his own business. Kids like him. (Men glance at each other significantly, then at BOY)

BLUE: married?

RED: No . . . (Frowns)

BLUE (Scowls): Boy, did that man say something to you?

WHITE (When BOY doesn't answer): I don't like it!

RED: (Glances off right): Gone . . . Must've taken the trail up to the quarry.

WHITE (Apprehensively): My boy's up there on a camp-out with his scout patrol!

BLUE (Incensed): All the kids swim bare in the quarry -- and that guy had a camera! (Jumps up and grabs BOY, who makes no attempt to escape) What'd that man try to do to you!? (Boy shakes his head. WHITE and RED get up and gather around BOY) Tell me or I'll beat

it out of you!

RED: Easy, Blue! Can't you see the kid's scared?

WHITE: Don't worry, son, you're safe now — we'll protect you!

RED: That's right — we're your friends!

BOY (Lowers his eyes): It's . . . it's dirty!  
(Bites his lip — to keep from smiling)

WHITE (Grimly): I knew it! I had a feeling . . .!

RED: Poor little kid . . .

BLUE (Gently): Just whisper it in my ear —  
(Viciously) so we can get even for you!

BOY whispers into BLUE's ear, BLUE into WHITE's and WHITE into RED's. Presently BOY touches his crotch tentatively, then covers it protectively. These gestures are repeated by BLUE, WHITE and RED. By turns, the men's faces reflect concern, outrage and finally fury. When BOY finishes story, men move away from him and toward right. The normal lighting dims and then is replaced by black lights, which reveal grotesque, primitive mask-like markings on the faces of the men. Then begin to grunt, snarl and gesture. When they finally rush off right, there is something faintly simian about their movements. After their exit, normal lighting is restored. BOY giggles, claps his hands and capers till . . .

BLACKOUT.

---

DOUGLAS ROOME works in California, has published before in *Gay Literature*. (#3).

# When was the last time you read a gay comedy? Huh?



"Tim McPICK is a delight from start to finish."

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—Roger Austen,  
San Francisco Sentinel

The John Parke Custis Press

c/o English Dept.  
CSUF  
Fresno, Ca. 93740

\$3.50

# Petunias

by Rolf Jarlsson

"Why don't you get us some ice?" said the man.

The boy grabbed the plastic tub from the top of the bureau and went downstairs to the lobby of the Inn. The youth who was folding sheets and towels went to the freezer, took out a container of ice, banged it on the floor to loosen the chunks, spilled some into the tub, handed it back to the boy and winked. The youth wore a sheer, flimsy bathing slip that revealed what it concealed and he looked like a faun but didn't have hair on his legs or horns over his eyes. The boy brought the ice into the room and the man tugged the ring from a can of coke. He dropped three ice cubes in a short glass, added rum and coke, stirred it with a finger and offered it to the boy. The man dashed out a taller glass of white wine and soda for himself.

"I'm tired," said the boy. "That was a long hike."

"It wasn't so long," said the man, "but the sand was mushy. Along the surf line it's usually pounded down and easy to walk on."

They went out to the front deck to watch the early evening promenade of drinkers and diners on their way to the bars and restaurants. They sat beside a large wooden vat used as a planter for petunias. The Assistant Manager, a lithe, handsome young man with long, wicked, brown legs was picking off the withered flowers and collecting them in a trash bag. The boy turned to admire the gardener and when he turned back the man was smiling. "You have a dirty mind," said the boy.

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"Not at all," said the man. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever, it's loveliness increases — just look at me."

The boy scowled, looked cross-eyed at the man and stuck out his tongue.

An elderly gentleman strolled past. He was in boots, a black leather jock strap; a wide dog collar studded with three rows of chromium bosses circled his neck.

"This is a strange place," said the boy, "not at all like Boston."

The man laughed. "The old gent probably has a three storey in Louisburg Square," he replied.

"Something is very good about the Island," the boy said, "and something is really crinkly."

"Guys come out here to be different," said the man, "and sometimes it gets a little out of control."

The flowers tumbled over the lip of the vat in thick, rich clusters, they felt velvet to the touch, their color was brilliant crimson, the imperial red used in coronation robes. With a thumb nail the boy pinched off a flower and slid it over his right ear in a shock of hair turned by the sun into white gold.

"On you it looks right," said the man. They watched a fat fellow in an evening gown of yards of pea green sateen making his way toward his dinner at the beachside restaurant. He wobbled on high heels, and picked his way cautiously so the spikes didn't slide down into the slots between the planks of the board walk.

"Crazy!" said the boy. "But he needs a girdle."

"What he needs is a diet," said the man.

"No wonder the straights put down gays for being unnatural," said the boy.

"The straights don't give a fuck for what's natural," said the man. "Go down to the beach on Sunday after the straights have left. That ribbon of white sand is smeared with their shit and garbage."

"The human race is totally screwed up," said the boy. "We never should have come down from the trees."

"Our first mistake was coming out of the water," the man said.

"At times I'd like to forget it all," said the boy, "just forget it all."

"That's what sex is for," said the man.

The boy swallowed the few drops left of his drink, tipped the glass to let an ice cube glide into his mouth, held it on his tongue, felt it melt

and trickle into his throat. He knew the man needed him. "Before dinner or after?" he asked.

"Before," the man answered.

"I'll need a shower," the boy said. "I'm sticky." He opened the screen door and went inside with his empty glass.

The man sat for a moment, alone, silent, then knocked the ashes from his pipe, and went round to the ocean side of the deck. He gazed at the darkening waters, the high running breakers crested with glistening plumes of whitecaps. He listened intently to the singing of the surf. Answering, he whispered softly, "Thalassa, thalassa, our home, our home." On his way to the boy's bed the man paused by the vat and snipped four very crimson flowers to decorate the tangle of blonde, soft young fur in the boy's loins.

# Review

by William Harrold

*Angels of the Lyre*, ed. Winston Leyland.  
Panjandrum Press and Gay Sunshine Press.  
San Francisco, 1975, 248 pp. Paperbound.  
\$4.95.

In editing *Angels of the Lyre* Winston Leyland has put together the most comprehensive contemporary volume of gay poetry to date. An angelophile himself, Leyland in his informative introduction describes the appropriateness of the title. Even the sun-god Apollo used the lyre to charm his lover Hypnos. Here fifty-seven modern poets from the United States and Canada, aged 22-62, assemble the largest orchestra that has been heard performing on the angelic lyre. Some of the writers in the anthology are bisexual (some perhaps multisexual). Most of them write many different kinds of poems. But the important thing is that the poems included here are performed in the key of gay sensibility, which in the past has been little recognized as any key at all. The works reflect various facets of the gay sensibility as we observe poems that make class structures and social mores seem foolish (Edward Field, pp. 78-80); poems that revive the young blood's fantasies/ poems that unzip down pornographic thighs (Joe Brainard, pp. 25-29); poems that remember heroes: O'Hara, Spicer, Whitman, Crane, Cassidy, Lorca, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Kerouac; poems where the "rhythm thrill-plunge & pull-back-bounce & push down" break out finally in mystical spiritual violence (Allen Ginsberg, p. 89); poems where in their secret vows the prisoners exchange spoon-rings (Paul Mariah, p. 138); poems where "Some boys open up their shirts/and the beauty almost hurts" (Chuck Ortley, p. 170); poems that exorcise the STRAIGHT/MAN/DEMON (Aaron Shurin, p. 193); poems where "the best loves are one-night stands!" (E. A. Lacey, p. 119); and poems

where "sometimes we were almost like lovers/ (As the sun almost touches the earth at sunset)" (Jack Spicer, p. 203).

Leyland has obviously concerned himself with quality first, or he could not have assembled so many good poems together. The styles and subjects are almost as varied as the poets. Yet a number of the poems are basically meat poems, such as Chuck Ortley's "Some Boys," which ends:

The meat of rough alleys hangs in their  
underwear.  
The kind of meat you pull out of the pants  
of muggers.  
The meat in its American juice that lays  
in jeeps and B-42's  
I mean the meat  
of all soldier boys who will bomb the hell  
out of heaven,  
the meat  
of all those high school cadets  
masturbating in the twilight as though they  
were landing a 747

(p. 170)

John Wieners captures remembered love with a haunting romantic musical quality:

He's gone and taken  
my morphine with him  
Oh Johnny. Women in  
the night moan yr. name  
(Act II, p. 213),

or in "Two Year's Later" : "The beauty of men never disappears/ But drives a blue car through the stars" (p. 223).

The poems in *Angels of the Lyre* range all the way from those that allude to the classical eros and the biblical scenes of passion ("This place

rumored to have been Sodom is blessd/in the Lord's eyes" — Robert Duncan, p. 53), to those such as Kirby Congdon's "Motorcyclist" that share the gold of gay love with machines:

Their leather torsos,  
riding iron bulls,  
.....  
copulate with their hot machines.  
Blood and oil are one.  
They eat and digest  
death. (p. 41).

William Barber succeeds with his low-key reality poem: "The only thing/ he saw me take with me was the Camels./ I smoked them for a day, to cover the empty spaces" (p. 16). Other styles add still more variety. R. Daniel Evans uses the epistolary mode in his "Letter to Walt Whitman" :

Sometimes, when I'm at the beach  
I see your muse.  
He's tall, goodlooking, has dark blond hair  
and a bulge in the crotch of his blue bikini.  
.....  
He'd understand a lot of your poems,  
be a camerado,  
and might start wearing a golden  
calamus root,  
on the same chain with his lambda sign.  
(p. 69).

And Gerald L. Fabian writes "An Elegy for a Lost Shipmate" : "As two ephebes trying to become men we absolutely/did not embrace, or did we?" (p. 71).

Other hard-burning highlights among too many to mention are: E. A. Lacey's prose-poem "Ramon," about picking up a sailor at Retiro Station; Harold Norse's "Let Me Love You All at Stillman's Gym"; Robert Peters' "Cool Zebras of Light," "Ode for Johnny Rio," and "On Being Ravished by an Angel"; Jack Spicer's "Some Notes on Whitman" ("There Walt is, crying like some great sea bird from the Emerald Palace, crying, 'Calamus, Calamus.' " p. 198).

Jonathan Williams is to be lauded for extending the angel lyre symphony to America's border states — his plunge into the heartland in "Lexington Nocturne." But Williams is also one of the poets who brings welcome humor into a world which too often has not been able to embrace comic joy. His "Mae West" piece is a delight as stanza 10 shows: "Mae West, to the Masked Bandito:/ Is that a gun in your pocket, or, do you love me?" (p. 228). Williams is joined by James Mitchell in "How to Become a Hero of Homosexuality": "Tell the lady at the Clap Clinic, 'Well actually the trouble is you see I got an itchy whizzer'," (p. 150).

Among the more radical experimentations are Ian Young's excellent "Moth" poems (p. 236) and Gerrit Lansing's "Cock Haiku," which no doubt will establish a new form. And David Emerson Smith's "II. L Street Expose" is a concrete whose effect cannot be denied.

The graphics are excellent throughout, and the biographical notes are just the right length to supplement but not intrude. The print is exceptionally comfortable, and the book is well bound. I recommend *Angel of the Lyre* highly! It is a pioneering work which cannot help but begin to breed its own kind: a new species.

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WILLIAM HARROLD teaches English in Milwaukee, has published poetry in over fifty magazines. His *Beyond the Dream* is available from Beacon Press.

## REVIEW by Daniel Curzon

### THE END OF INTELLIGENT WRITING

by Richard Kostelanetz

Sheed and Ward

THE END OF INTELLIGENT WRITING is a major book, for gays and non-gays alike. Its importance for gays lies in the way that Kostelanetz documents how big publishers in New York increasingly are becoming part of conglomerates, whose primary purpose is profit-making. Whereas a book once upon a time could sell 3000 copies and make its money back, now the profit-oriented publishing companies demand a sale of 10,000 copies. Can there be any doubt about what results? Crap. Publishers increasingly are closing their doors to all but the most mass-market of mass-market products. For gays this means a minimizing of the outlets available for serious gay writing. Especially does fiction suffer, since only pop books like THE FRONT RUNNER and CONSENTING ADULT make it into print with the Biggies.

THE FRONT RUNNER is not literature. It's immensely readable, but it's a slick book. It is a book calculated to capitalize on the gay craving for macho heroes, for monogamous love, for fidelity, for a dead hero who dies through no fault of his own. For the gay press to promote a shallow book like THE FRONT RUNNER is a terrible comment on the literary taste of the gay community! And yet, as the editor of this magazine, I know that there are many good writers writing quality works. They are not interested in the slick triviality of THE FRONT RUNNER or the pulp inconsequence of pornography. But small magazines like GAY LITERATURE and small presses fighting to publish quality books face a tremendous struggle because they don't have the distribution of the Biggies, or access to the major magazines and newspapers because they can't afford to advertise there.

What's so good about THE END OF INTELLIGENT WRITING is how the author proves the existence of literary-industrial mobs (such as the

editorship of THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS) and gives all readers valuable suggestions on how to get around these mobs—or at least how to shout out their corruption, their aesthetic conservatism, and their unfair monopoly of the literary world.

My only criticism of the book is that in his effort to create a taste for experimental writing (like his own of course) Kostelanetz sometimes is forced into defending works that simply can't be defended seriously, for example, a poem that consists of the word "which" repeated fifty times. What's to stop anybody from repeating every word in the dictionary fifty times apiece—and thus creating the most "substantial" corpus of creative work in the history of mankind! No, I don't want to stop anybody from doing this, but I don't want to read such nonsense either!

I also have the feeling that much experimental writing cares so much for new forms because it has no content. Everything is expended on saying something in a radical way, but nothing much is said. Fortunately, this is not the problem of gay literature at all. Gay writers today at last have the chance to spill it all out after thousands of years of taboo. What a great time to be gay!

But let there be no mistake that THE END OF INTELLIGENT WRITING is of major importance. DO READ IT! It was published several years ago and only now is getting the attention it deserves. Maybe. But then that seems to be the way with literature. The established gets immense respect and publicity; the worthwhile new goes ignored for a long time. Yet, as Kostelanetz points out, there's absolutely no guarantee that time will inevitably work in favor of quality work. Quality work may lie buried forever. Somebody has to see that it gets attention. Not somebody in the future—somebody *now!* THE END OF INTELLIGENT WRITING illustrates how naive, how simple-mindedly optimistic most of us have been about the "natural" rise of cream to the top.

Kostelanetz is to be congratulated, praised, cheered, and hugged for having the guts to take on the Biggies and call them by their rightful names. (I wonder if he's been rubbed out yet.)





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